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THE CASE FOR THE SEA-SERPENT

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

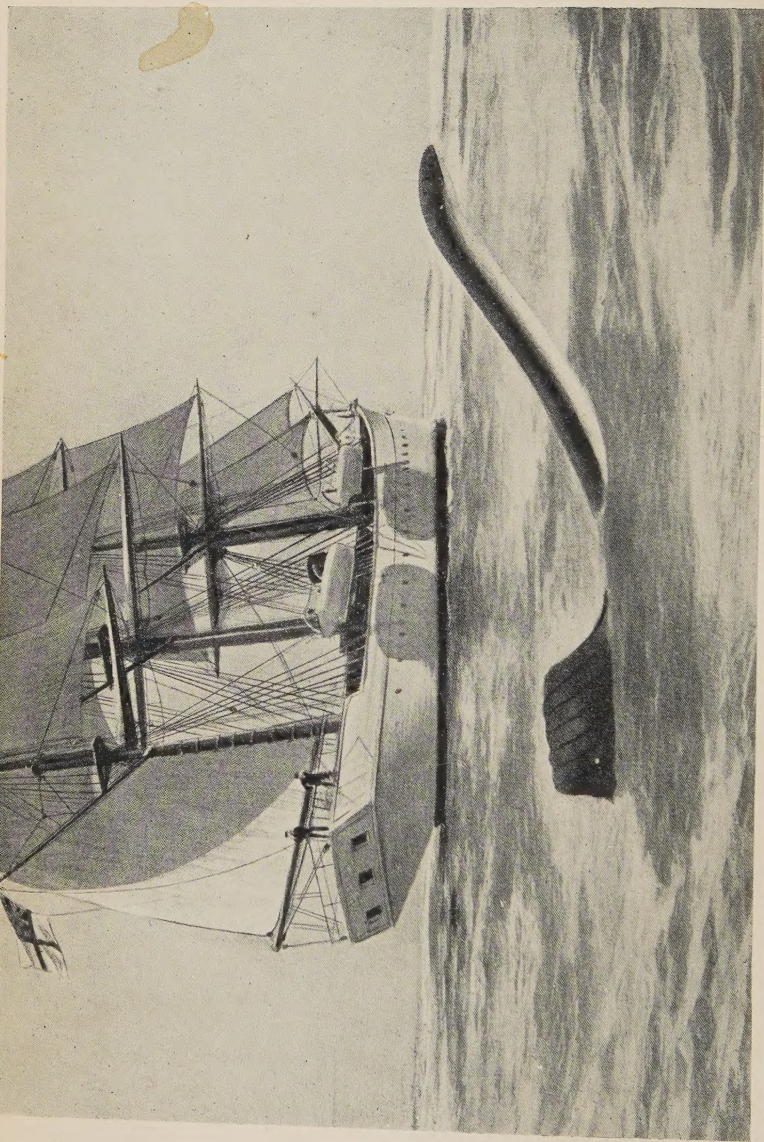
THE MARINE CHRONOMETER: ITS HISTORY
AND DEVELOPMENT

ODDITIES: A BOOK OF UNEXPLAINED FACTS

ENIGMAS: ANOTHER BOOK OF UNEXPLAINED FACTS

NINE DAYS' WONDERS (*In preparation*)





[Frontispiece

THE 'VALHALLA'S' SEA MONSTER

NOTE.—This drawing is not authoritative; but it is founded upon a sketch by an eye-witness (see Fig. 20).

THE CASE FOR THE SEA-SERPENT

BY LIEUT.-COMMANDER
R. T. GOULD

R.N. (RETIRED)

AUTHOR OF 'ODDITIES'



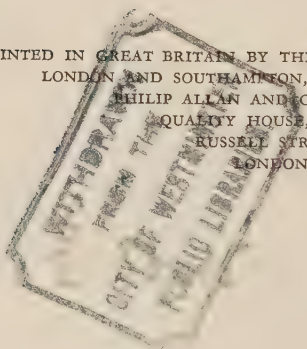
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TO
ARMOREL DAPHNE HERON-ALLEN
15 JUNE 1908 ——— 3 JULY 1930

TO THE READER, IN MITIGATION OF A THIRD OFFENCE

I FEEL that an apology, or at least an explanation, is necessary for a book dealing with such a 'fo'c'sle yarn' as the sea-serpent.

My excuse must be, that I believe in the sea-serpent. I have long been interested in the subject, and I should have devoted an essay to it in one of my two former books, *Oddities* and *Enigmas*, had I not become convinced that it could not be adequately treated in so limited a space.

I do not suggest that it is adequately treated in this monograph. I have no claim to be considered an expert on questions of natural history and comparative anatomy ; upon such matters I must beg to be regarded chiefly as having the courage of other people's opinions. Still, I have done my best to present the case for the real existence of the creatures popularly called 'sea-serpents' as fully (and, I hope, as fairly) as I can ; and I have no quarrel with my brief. I have done what I can to appeal against a verdict of long standing, and I believe that such action is justified : but if the appeal should be unsuccessful, this must be attributed to the ineptitude of its advocate.

I have to thank the following for readily giving permission to reproduce copyright matter :

Messrs. Constable & Co. (Plate VII).

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Messrs. H. F. & G. Witherby (extract from M. J. Nicholl's *Three Voyages of a Naturalist*).

The Zoological Society of London (extract from *Proceedings*, 1906 – Fig. 20).

I should like also to express my thanks to the authorities of the Natural History Museum and the Admiralty Library: and to many friends and correspondents – notably Dr. Helene Bargmann, Mr. J. Mackintosh Bell, W.S., Mr. W. D. Campbell, Capt. R. J. Cringle, Capt. F. W. Dean, R.N., Capt. F. E. B. Haselfoot, R.N., Dr. F. M. Matheson, Mr. E. G. B. Meade-Waldo, Mr. T. A. R. Muir, Capt. Roger Pocock, Dr. James Ritchie, Lt.-Commdr. R. M. Southern, R.N., and Mr. R. Humphrey Eggar.

RUPERT T. GOULD.

ASHTEAD, 1930.

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INTRODUCTION

THE sea-serpent has, of course, long been relegated by that infallible arbiter, public opinion, to the limbo of 'silly season' topics, in company with the giant gooseberry, 'Is Marriage a Failure?' and 'Do we believe?', while signs are not wanting that his vogue, even in such humble surroundings, is not what it was. For example, I have not seen any recent reference to the subject in the writings of that very remarkable and imperfectly-informed body, the occasional correspondents of the Sunday papers. He is paying the penalty for over-exploitation in bygone days, when there were still a few trusting folk who believed what they saw in print. To-day, I doubt whether anything less than the installation of a living sea-serpent at the Zoo – a contingency which I regard as extremely improbable – would carry conviction with the public as a proof of his existence. I am quite certain that the best-authenticated narratives of unimpeachable eye-witnesses would, singly, be insufficient: and when I make that assertion I am on tolerably safe ground, for many such narratives are on record, and have never been satisfactorily explained away.

I don't think that we are quite so dogmatic as we used to be; in fact, many instances might be cited to show that the credulity of the present age, on certain subjects, is almost unfathomable, and its motto Tertullian's '*... certum est, quia incredibile.*' But I have no wish to ask for a revision of the accepted view of the sea-serpent merely on the ground that we are not quite so sure of the extent of our knowledge as we were in the eighteenth

and nineteenth centuries. I rely more on the self-evident fact that no one is properly qualified to express an opinion on a complicated question without having studied the evidence – and I submit that when the case for the sea-serpent's existence is examined in detail one can scarcely fail to be struck with the consistent and weighty character of the evidence, and the almost puerile nature of many of the numerous (and inconsistent) attempts to discredit and belittle it by supplying some naturalistic explanation.¹ Broadly speaking, it may be said that those who don't know the facts of the case regard the sea-serpent as an exploded myth – those who do, don't.

Whatever the public view may be, it is heartening (if one happens to be among the minority) to notice that of late years writers on the subject have shown a distinct tendency to 'hedge,' and to replace a categorical denial by a plea for suspended judgment – or even a cautious and guarded affirmation. I need only give two instances of this. The article 'Sea-serpent' in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* (eleventh edition, 1911)² concludes thus :

'It would thus appear that, while, with very few exceptions, all the so-called 'sea-serpents' can be explained by reference to some well-known animal or other natural object, there is still a residuum sufficient to prevent modern zoologists from denying the possibility that some such creature may after all exist.'

And even the much shorter article³ in the present edition (1930) finds room to remark :

'When, however, all these and similar possibilities have

¹ See p. 203 for an excellent example.

² By Mr. J. T. Cunningham and the late Mr. W. E. Hoyle.

³ By Mr. H. W. Parker, of the Natural History Museum.

been explored, there still remain a number of independent and apparently credible stories which are not satisfactorily explained.'

While Mr. E. C. Boulenger, director of the Zoological Society's aquarium, writing in 1926, remarks¹:

'The very fact that in recent times sea-serpent stories have been invariably received with derision is surely, in many cases, evidence of their veracity, as only those conscious of their own unimpeachable honesty would be tempted to encounter the sneers of their incredulous countrymen. The sea-serpent should not be hastily dismissed because he has not been actually hooked. The yet unexplored areas of the ocean run into many hundreds of square miles,² and it would be almost surprising if the sea did not yield some hitherto unknown creature of large size. I submit, therefore, that we should at least give the sea-serpent the benefit of the doubt, and not condemn him along with all those who have testified to his existence.'

It can scarcely be contested that informed opinions such as these are decidedly at variance with the popular view of the subject – which, so far as I can judge, appears to be that certain foolish persons, such as myself, are credulous enough to believe in the existence of *one* gigantic (and, presumably, immortal) 'Great Sea-Serpent' – and that this creature, like other mythical entities (such as Davy Jones, the Flying Dutchman, and the Phoenix) is a pure or adulterated myth.

Not improbably, I am credulous – certainly I entertain a somewhat heterodox opinion about the general public.

¹ *Daily Telegraph*, 16, viii. 26. ² This is enormously under-stated.

I believe that if the evidence for the sea-serpent¹ could ever be fairly appreciated by its more intelligent members, they would come to the conclusion that, while the term 'sea-serpent' is a misleading one, there does exist, although only in small numbers and infrequently seen, a large marine monster of a type, or types, quite unlike any living creature at present known to science.

It must be remembered that, as Mr. Boulenger remarks, the effect of adverse public opinion has undoubtedly tended to restrict the amount of available evidence.² Many people like to see their names in print ; but few, I imagine, would deliberately go out of their way to invite ridicule. Before public opinion shifted so definitely to the wrong side of the question there were, of course, practical jokers who took a delight in hoaxing the public with stories of sea-serpents ; but nowadays such persons confine their perverted ingenuity to visiting H.M. Ships in the guise of Oriental potentates, or jettisoning bogus bottle-messages from missing flyers — for the sea-serpent, as a hoax, is well-known even to the Marines, and his 'news value' almost nil. Nothing, in its way, could be more true to life than Kipling's story 'A Matter of Fact,'³ in which the death of a sea-serpent, as the result of a submarine volcanic explosion, is witnessed by a party of journalists : who subsequently find,

¹ It may be noted that here, and henceforward, I use the term sea-serpent, without inverted commas, to denote a large marine creature, with serpentine head and neck, of the type frequently reported. The term is a misnomer, but one sanctioned by long use. It should not be taken as referring to the known sea-snakes, such as *Pelamys bicolor*.

² On this point, see the remarks on pp. 189 and 203.

³ In *Many Inventions* (1893). It is one of Fate's little ironies that the s.s. *Armada Castle*, with Mr. Kipling on board, should have been reported, in 1904, as having been in collision with a sea-serpent. What she actually struck was either a large shark or a small whale. See the *Illustrated London News*, 11. ii. 1905.

as might have been expected, that no editor will look at their 'stories.' I am convinced that many encounters with sea-serpents have gone unchronicled, simply because the witnesses were not prepared to make martyrs of themselves, as far as their own peace of mind and reputation were concerned, in the cause of unpopular truth.

It is perfectly true that many reports of sea-serpents – in fact, the majority of them – relate to creatures seen in what is known as the 'silly season.' For this somewhat unfortunate coincidence – it is nothing more – there is an excellent reason. The weight of evidence goes to show that these creatures are generally seen basking on the surface in warm and calm weather. If such is their habit, nothing could be more natural than that reports of them should generally come to hand towards the end of summer.

Besides, if we assume as a working hypothesis that these creatures are a rare and timid species, probably verging on extinction, the chances are obviously much against their coming under the notice of properly-qualified scientific observers – although, as will appear, one of the most recent appearances took place before two witnesses who were both Fellows of the Zoological Society.

Similarly, since the screw-propeller ante-dates the portable camera, and is audible (under water) for miles, it is most unlikely that such creatures, if rare and timid, should ever be photographed, except by accident. The evidence relating to them is practically bound to consist of statements made by casual witnesses, possessed of no great scientific or artistic qualifications. It is for this reason that too great stress should not be laid upon the discrepancies between the sketches (by eye-witnesses) illustrating this book. If, say, a dozen jurymen, not trained to handle a pencil, were told to make a sketch of the judge in court, or from memory soon after being

discharged, it is most improbable that there would be any general measure of agreement between their results. Yet each would honestly have endeavoured to depict what he saw ; and it would surely be an unfair inference – amounting almost to a contempt of court – to argue, on the basis of such lack of agreement, that His Lordship had no real existence.

So far as I am aware, only one attempt has been made to collect *all* the available evidence on the subject, and to discuss it fairly and fully, with the object of framing a theory to cover all the facts. This is a book entitled *The Great Sea-Serpent*, and written by Dr. A. C. Oudemans of Arnhem (published in October 1892¹). The plan of this book was an excellent one ; it was confessedly designed in imitation of Chladni's great work on meteorites.

Meteorites provide a leading example of a subject upon which the dogmatism of sciolists has been ultimately defeated, and the popular view confirmed, by the patient accumulation and examination of evidence. Meteoric stones have been known in all ages, and opinion as to their origin was sharply divided until about a century ago, the popular view (supported, it must be said, by a certain number of learned men) being that they fell from the sky ; while on the other hand a large number of ' natural philosophers ' roundly asserted, on *a priori* grounds, that such a thing was impossible.

¹ 'THE GREAT SEA-SERPENT': / An Historical and Critical Treatise. / With the reports of 187 appearances (including / those of the appendix) the suppositions and / suggestions of scientific and / non-scientific persons, and the author's conclusions. / / With 82 Illustrations. / By / A. C. Oudemans, Jzn., / Doctor of Zoology and Botany, Member of the Zoological Society of the / Netherlands, Director of the Royal Zoological and Botanical / Society (Zoological Gardens) at the Hague. / / Published by the Author, October 1892. (Leiden, E. J. Brill, Oude Rijn 33a. London, Luzac & Co., Great Russell Street 46.)

But at last there appeared a sagacious and patient examiner of the whole subject, E. F. F. Chladni (1756 – 1827), a German scientist who is best remembered as one of the founders of modern acoustics. Chladni took the trouble to collect all available observations of meteoric stones, from the earliest records to his own day : and in a work published in 1819¹ he showed, first of all, the immense amount of material available ; and, secondly, the strikingly consistent character of the independent items of evidence. The popular (and undoubtedly correct) theory of the origin of meteorites has been generally accepted ever since.

But, however worthily planned, I am much afraid that Oudemans' book has not been so successful as Chladni's. For this there are several reasons. In the first place, its language – English – is foreign both to the author and to his printer. Considered simply as a piece of English prose, the book is by no means ill-written ; but it is not easy reading, and its style has a peculiar sharpness – approaching petulance. Occasionally, too, there are amusing *laches*, as when we are informed that the whale is encased in a thick layer of 'bacon' – for blubber. The printer, of course, appears at his worst ; hardly a page is free from a misprint of some kind.

More serious than mere misprints are the innumerable errors of transcription, which make it quite impossible to trust any of the extracts (with which the book abounds) as exact copies of the originals. The work's size and format, too, are against it ; 592 closely-printed pages, comprising some 280,000 words², without an index.

But, in my submission, the book's principal defect is twofold. The evidence has not been scrutinised carefully

¹ *Ueber Feuer-Meteore*. Vienna, 1819.

² This book contains about 75,000.

enough – and upon his not exactly trustworthy foundations Dr. Oudemans has erected a vast superstructure of theory which they are in no way fit to support. Of his 187 cases, I should reject at least half, either because the evidence is insufficient, or because the facts admit of a different explanation. And as to his deductions, it need only be said that he devotes ninety pages to an elaborate exposition of the sea-serpent's characteristics – including, as well as its appearance and dimensions, sections upon its eating, food, breathing, excretion ; the functions of its five senses ; the operation of its muscular system ; the mobility of its organs ; its *thirteen* psychical characteristics such as 'curiosity, probably mixed with suspicion,' 'fury,' and 'playsomeness' ; its enemies : and its repose, sleep, and death ! This meticulous discussion would be surprising enough in the case of a creature whose appearance and structure were known by many specimens and preparations, and whose habits had long been closely studied by competent observers ; in the case of one unknown to science, and only glimpsed at rare intervals by casual seafarers, such a proceeding seems not a little ridiculous.

Still, with all its faults, Oudemans' book deserves to be remembered as an honest, painstaking, and compendious attempt to recall public interest to an undeservedly discredited subject. I hardly expect that I shall succeed where he failed ; but I should like to indicate in what manner the lines and scope of this book differ from those which he adopted.

I have selected from the material available (some of it of post-Oudemans date) about thirty reports of sea-serpents. The principles governing this selection have been, first, to admit no case concerning whose provenance there is any doubt ; and, secondly, to reject

any in which there appears the slightest likelihood that some known creature was mistaken for what was reported.

The details of each case have been verified as far as possible. That is to say, if any collateral evidence (such as a ship's log) was procurable, this was collated with the report itself, and the result stated. Furthermore, the text of each report is given, as far as possible, from its original source, and not from any re-printed version. In general, I have done my best to ensure that the texts of the evidence given in this book are as accurate as I could make them, whatever value may be placed upon that evidence itself.

I should explain that while I have divided the longer quotations into paragraphs at my own discretion, I have taken no other liberties with them, and that their spelling, punctuation, etc., are unaltered in every case. An occasional (*sic*) has, none the less, been used here and there — for various reasons. The illustrations are, generally, reproduced or copied from actual sketches made by eye-witnesses. When a drawing (*e.g.* Bing's)¹ has been copied and re-copied, I have given the earliest available form of it, as being the most accurate. I have occasionally included a modern drawing. In all cases, the source of each illustration is indicated in the accompanying letterpress; and when a drawing is not to be taken as authoritative, the fact is so stated.

It is my hope that the following chapters may, at least, provide a sound basis upon which those better qualified than I am may erect their own theories. In the concluding chapter I have, very briefly, indicated my personal opinions.

¹ Fig. 1.

CH. I. TWO EIGHTEENTH - CENTURY REPORTS

As originally planned, this book was not intended to contain any reference to sea-monsters reported at an earlier date than A.D. 1800. But, on reflection, I decided that it would be a mistake to omit the reports of Hans Egede (1734) and Lorenz von Ferry (1746). Egede's sea-monster finds a place in almost every work dealing with the sea-serpent ; while Ferry's is one of the cases collected and published (in 1753) by Erik Pontoppidan, Bishop of Bergen – and a book on the sea-serpent which omitted some mention of Pontoppidan (who is more closely associated with that creature than any other man who ever lived) would indeed be like Hamlet without the Prince.¹ While, therefore, I wish it to be understood that I do not regard the two following reports as quite reaching the standard of evidence aimed at in the succeeding chapters, they are inserted on account of their importance in the history of the subject. I will add, that I see no reason to doubt the essential truth of the particulars which they relate.

Hans Egede, 1734.

In 1740 Hans Egede, a Norwegian pastor who has been justly styled 'the apostle of Greenland,' published an account² of one of his missionary voyages to the

¹ I have read somewhere (although I cannot lay my hand on the reference), that a version of the Hamlet story was actually published at Amsterdam, early in the seventeenth century, in which the character of Hamlet was, in fact, totally omitted – Laertes becoming the central figure.

² I have not been able to consult a copy of this work. Its title, as translated by Oudemans, is *A Full and Particular Relation of a Voyage to*

settlement founded by him at Godthaab in Greenland ; a land then as remote from mankind as the Antarctic regions are to-day. In this book he gave a short account of a sea-monster seen by him off the west coast of Greenland, in 1734.

' Anno 1734, July. On the 6th. appeared a very terrible sea-monster, which raised itself so high above the water, that its head reached above our main-top. It had a long sharp snout, and blew like a whale, had broad, large flappers, and the body was, as it were, covered with a hard skin, and it was very wrinkled and uneven on its skin ; moreover on the lower part it was formed like a snake, and when it went under water again, it cast itself backwards and in so doing it raised its tail above the water, a whole ship-length from its body. That evening we had very bad weather.'

There is another account of this creature, also by Hans Egede, in his *Det gamle Grønlands nye Perlustration*. . . .¹ In the contemporary English translation² this runs as follows :

' . . . As for other Sea Monsters . . . none of them have been seen by us, or any of our Time, that ever I could hear, save that most dreadful Monster, that showed itself upon the Surface of the Water in the Year 1734, off our New Colony in 64 Degrees.'

Greenland, in the year 1734. The passage here quoted is taken from Povel (Paul) Egede's ' Continuation ' of his father's journal, as translated by Oudemans ; it agrees very closely with the (1755) English translation of Pontoppidan, in which the same passage is quoted from Egede's original work.

¹ (Copenhagen, 1741).

² *A Description of Greenland*, London, 1745 (pp. 85-89).

³ Godthaab, on the west coast of Greenland. It is actually in lat. 64° 10' N.

This Monster was of so huge a Size, that coming out of the Water, its Head reached as high as the Mast-Head ; its Body was as bulky as the Ship, and three or four times as long. It had a long pointed Snout, and spouted like a Whale-Fish ; great broad Paws, and the Body seemed covered with Shell-work, its skin very rugged and uneven. The under Part of its Body was shaped like an enormous huge Serpent, and when it dived again under Water, it plunged backwards into the Sea, and so raised its Tail aloft, which seemed a whole Ship's Length distant from the bulkiest part of the Body.'

About 1741 Egede's son Povel published a continuation of his father's Greenland journal,¹ containing a map of Godthaab and its vicinity, drawn by a brother-missionary of his father's, one Bing. On this map appears a figure of the 'most dreadful Monster' (fig. 1). This figure has been several times redrawn — and, as a matter of course, distorted. For example, an amplified, though recognisable, version appeared in the *Illustrated London News*² at the time (1848) when the *Dædalus* case was attracting great attention ; while a plate in Hamilton's *Amphibious Carnivora*³ shows the creature prancing like the horse on the boiler of a steam-roller, and spouting a vertical jet of water whose apparent volume is almost as great as that of its whole body.

Egede's account, too, has been woefully garbled by successive translators. For example, a French edition of

¹ *Continuation af Relationerne Betreffende Den Groenlandste Missions*, Copenhagen, n.d. (Oudemans gives the date as 1741, but the copy I have examined (B.M.) is undated.)

² 28. x. 1848.

³ *Amphibious Carnivora* (vol. VI of Jardine's 'Naturalist's Library'). Dr. R. Hamilton. Edinburgh, 1843.

the *Description of Greenland*,¹ published in 1763, relates that the animal was covered with scales, and plunged back into the water with its belly upwards ; and a German re-translation of this, in the same year, goes one better,

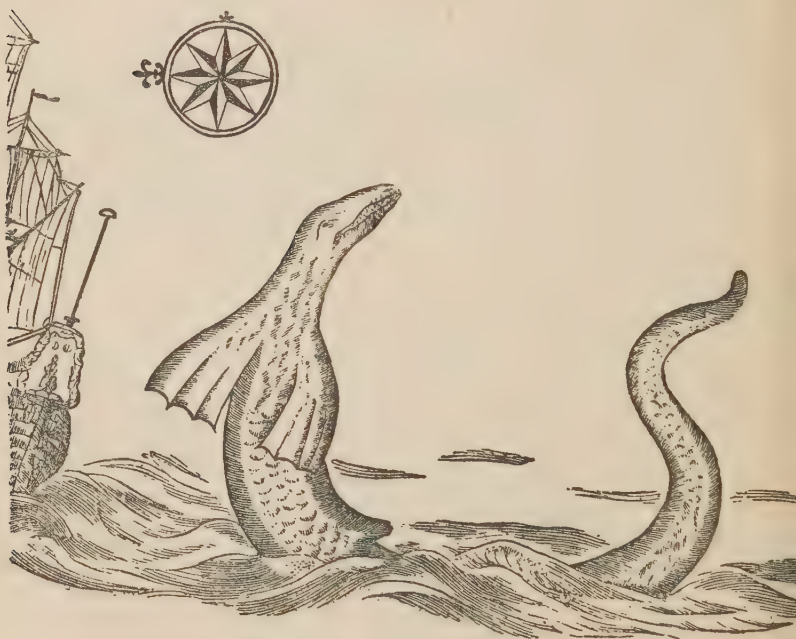


FIG. I. EGEDE'S SEA MONSTER

From Bing's map

NOTE.—In the original, the creature is shown as spouting a column of water which supports a figure upholding the title of the map. In view of its decorative character, this embellishment has been omitted.

and makes the monster float on the surface, belly upwards !^a

In considering this case, therefore, it is vitally necessary to deal only with the original accounts written by Egede,

¹ *Description et Histoire naturelle de Groenland*, Copenhagen and Geneva, 1763.

² *Beschreibung und Naturgeschichte von Groenland*, Berlin, 1763.

supplemented by Bing's figure. I am uncertain how much authority the latter possesses. It has been stated¹ that it was ' . . . made by Mr. Bing aboard his (Egede's) ship, directly after the appearance of the animal.' The only authority I can find for this statement is Pontopidan's remark, in a footnote:

' . . . Mr. Bing, one of the missionaries that took a drawing of it, informed his brother-in-law, Mr. Sylow, minister of Houg in this diocese, that this creature's eye seemed red, and like burning fire.'

This affords presumptive, but not quite conclusive evidence that Bing saw the creature himself, and that his drawing was based on his own observations ; but while it is quite likely that he made it soon after the event, *how* soon is entirely uncertain. I mention this point because, as will be seen, a very ingenious attempt has been made to explain Egede's monster on the basis of Bing's drawing — which can scarcely be regarded as carrying the same weight as Egede's description.

As already remarked, Egede's account of his ' very terrible sea-monster ' has always commanded a good deal of attention. This is deservedly due, in great measure, to his very considerable qualifications as a trustworthy witness, and to the truthfulness and nobility of his character. Of his protracted and laborious labours as a missionary *in paribus infidelium* this is not the place to speak, although they won him the good will and respect of all Europe ; but no one who has even cursorily examined his books will deny that he was not only a zealous missionary, but also a keen observer and patient recorder of any new and striking facts (especially those of natural history) which came under his notice. In general his

¹ By Oudemans — on p. 117 of his book.

descriptions are most accurate, and free from exaggeration ; although it must be admitted that, in common with most naturalists of his time, he occasionally goes astray when relating matters of hearsay, uncritically accepted.¹

In this case, however, he describes an event which he himself witnessed. In effect he tells us that he saw a creature of serpentine form, with a bulky body, raise a pointed head, long neck, a pair of paddles and part of its body, until its head was some thirty feet² above water. Sinking again soon afterwards, it lifted a long tail in the air at some distance from where its body was.

At first sight, it seems possible that what he saw was a whale 'breaching.' Whales, when irritated by parasites (or for some other obscure reason) sometimes jump right out of water — a very surprising and unusual sight. But this theory does not square with the facts. In Egede's *Description of Greenland* he gives a plate³ showing, very clearly and accurately, various species of whales — right whale, rorqual, and 'killer.' A later plate gives a very accurate figure of a narwhal. It seems obvious that a man so well acquainted with whales would not describe one, of any species, as a 'very terrible sea-monster,' nor would he use such a misleading expression as '... it blew like a whale' if it actually were one.

It may be noted that Egede's account of the creature's 'paws' (in conjunction with Bing's drawing) is curiously recalled by an account, published in 1891, of a sea-monster seen on July 24th of that year off East Cape, North

¹ For example, in his *Description of Greenland* . . . (p. 94 of the English translation) he gravely re-tells, as fact, the old fable about the evolution of the 'Barnacle goose' from the barnacle.

² Assuming his ship to have been 250 tons or so.

³ Opposite p. 37. The plates are not numbered.

Island (New Zealand). Mr. A. F. Mathews, a surveyor and (with several others) an eye-witness, remarks¹ :

‘ It would from time to time lift its head and part of its body to a great height perpendicularly, and when in that position would turn its body round in a most peculiar manner, displaying a black back, white belly, and two armlet appendages of great length, which appeared to dangle about like a broken limb on a human being. It would then suddenly drop back into the water. . . .’

The same, or a very similar creature, was also seen, in the same neighbourhood, on August 1st following, by the *Rotomahana*, of the Union Steam-Shipping Co. By the accounts² of her chief officer (Mr. A. L. Kerr) and quartermaster (Peter Nelson) it was undoubtedly no whale, having a maximum girth, as far as could be seen, of some ten or twelve feet – yet it rose out of the water to a height of some thirty feet, looking like a huge conger eel, but with two large fins, about ten feet long.

It should be noted, however, that while I have adduced this case because of its resemblance to Egede’s narrative, I do not put it forward as absolutely indisputable evidence – for two reasons. Mr. Mathews’ creature was half a mile away when seen ; and while the *Rotomahana* was within a hundred yards of hers, there is an internal defect in her evidence. Both her witnesses agree that the time was about 6.30 a.m., and that the sun was shining brightly. But, for the date (August 1st) and position given, the sun would not have risen until about half an hour later. No doubt there is some simple explanation of the discrepancy – she may have been keeping the time

¹ *Standard*, 22, ix. 1891.

² *Newcastle Evening Chronicle*, 23, ix. 1891.

of her port of departure, or arrival, for example – but I have no means of arriving at it.

To return to Egede's monster. It was not, it would seem, a whale ; and it was certainly too large for a shark or any other known creature. That a living creature was seen, few who can form a just estimate of Egede's character will deny. That it was of unknown type, would also seem to require very little further demonstration. Such, however, was not the view of Henry Lee – a naturalist well-known in his day – who put forward in 1883 the singular theory that what Egede had taken for the head and neck of a serpentine monster was, in reality, the tail of a giant squid.

The story of how the 'decapod,' or giant ten-armed squid – of which the octopus, beloved of Victor Hugo, is a humbler relation – passed in fifty years or so from an old-wives-tale to an accepted scientific fact is an interesting one, which has considerable bearing on the analogous case of the sea-serpent.

Stories of giant many-armed sea-monsters – beasts, capable of attacking boats, and even ships, and carrying off their crews – are to be found among the folk-lore of all seafaring nations. Representations of such monsters are to be found here, there, and everywhere ; on Mycenaean urns, in stained-glass windows, in Japanese colour-prints and woodcuts. But until comparatively recent years no specimens of any such creature had ever come under scientific observation ; and the efforts of such writers as Pontoppidan – of whom more anon – and the even more credulous Denys de Monfort¹ to compile such stories and distil some residue of truth from them, only succeeded in intensifying the popular view that the 'Kraken' was a myth.

¹ See his *Histoire Naturelle des Mollusques*, tom. 2, Paris, An. X. – 1802.

Gradually, however, this view was overborne by the weight of evidence. Reports, vague but persistent, accumulated of instances in which such creatures had been cast ashore ; dead and mutilated, in most cases, but still recognisable. One was stranded off Zeeland in or about 1847, another at the Skaw in 1854, and one in the Shetland Isles in 1861. In the latter year, too, occurred the famous case of the *Alecton*.

On November 30th, 1861, the French corvette of that name encountered a giant squid swimming on the surface, about 120 miles north-eastward of Tenerife. After cannonading it ineffectually for some time, an attempt (which naturally failed) was made to haul it on board. The French officers estimated its length (less tentacles) at fifteen feet, and its weight at two tons or so.

Nor was this all. Between 1870 and 1877 inclusive, not less than a dozen or so of these strange monsters were stranded on the shores of Newfoundland — a fact suggesting a sudden change of habitat, for no previous visits to that locality were recorded. One of them which turned up in Conception Bay¹ on October 26th, 1873, was attacked by two fishermen in an open boat. They got away with their lives, plus part of one arm, severed by a lucky blow with a hatchet. The creature's dimensions, computed from this relic, were : body, 10 feet long, $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet diameter ; head, 2 feet diameter ; long arms, about 32 feet² ; total length, about 44 feet. Several museums now possess more or less complete specimens.

The giant squid, therefore, became an accepted fact in the 'seventies ; and it was natural that it should be looked upon as a sort of 'universal solvent' of all 'sea

¹ A large bay at the S.E. extremity of Newfoundland.

² The decapod has eight short arms and two disproportionately long ; the octopus, eight of much the same length.

monster ' narratives. One might have thought that, since naturalists had been brought to see that a so-called myth had a real foundation, and that the sea held at least one large creature of which they had no knowledge, they might have gone a step further, and admitted that there might be others also. Possibly, some did ; but the more general attitude, I think, was that assumed by Lee in his *Sea Monsters Unmasked*¹ – a somewhat optimistic title – which endeavoured to show that such stories as Egede's, and that of the *Dædalus*, were distorted narratives of an encounter with a giant squid.

In the case of Egede's monster, Lee supported this view by means of a most ingenious sketch (reproduced in Fig. 2), which well repays close scrutiny. Comparing it with Bing's drawing (Fig. 1) it will be seen how cleverly Lee has made the above-water portion of his sketch agree with this. At first sight, it seems to carry complete conviction. But, actually, it will not stand examination.

In the first place, Lee's theory fits Bing's drawing (up to a point), but it does not square with a more authoritative piece of evidence – Egede's own statement. Egede tells us that the creature 'blew like a whale' ; *i.e.* from its head – not from a submerged tube some thirty feet distant.

In addition, the sketch contains two mechanical impossibilities. A squid in the position shown would have all its arms together and pointing downwards ; it could not propel itself out of the water by its impulse tube and simultaneously raise one of its long arms, as shown. And secondly, the tube itself would also be pointing downwards, and could not spout upwards as in the sketch. Incidentally, for the body to rise thirty feet or

¹ *Sea Monsters Unmasked*, Henry Lee (London, 1883).

so out of water, its length would have to be some fifty feet or so — corresponding to a squid weighing some 200 tons, with arms about 160 feet long ! Most probably we have not yet seen the full size to which the giant squid

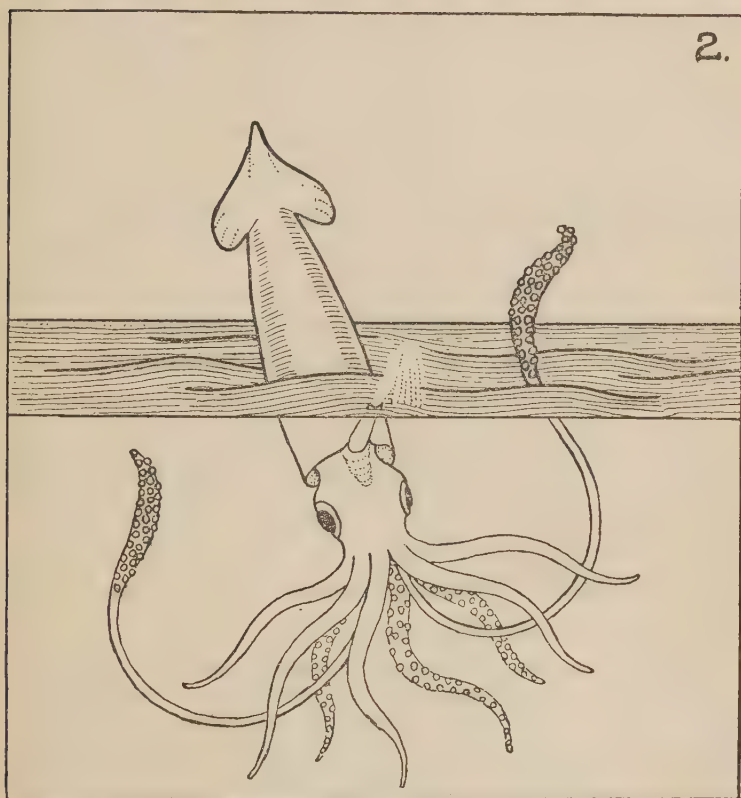


FIG. 2. LEE'S EXPLANATION OF EGEDE'S SEA-MONSTER

Re-drawn (with amendments) from his *Sea Monsters Unmasked*

can attain — still, a creature of such size, even if it filled the bill in other respects (which it does not) would scarcely commend itself, I suggest, to the sceptic any more than the alternative hypothesis : that Egede saw a large creature of serpentine form and unknown type.

Lorenz von Ferry, 1746.

This case is taken from the *Natural History of Norway*¹ written by the celebrated Erik Pontoppidan, Bishop of Bergen from 1747 to 1764. Like James Bruce, the explorer of Abyssinia,² it was Pontoppidan's fate to be denounced in his own day as a modern Mandeville, on account of the improbable nature of some of his statements. It falls to be recorded, however, that in at least one case those same derided statements (which, it should be noted, did not profess to be based on his personal knowledge) have been proved, long afterwards, to possess a very considerable basis of truth. I refer to the 'Kraken.' Pontoppidan devoted several pages to an account of this 'mythical' creature, compiled from the traditions respecting it current among the Norwegian fishermen of his day.

As already stated, this giant many-armed sea-monster was not entirely a myth; and while many of Pontoppidan's anecdotes respecting it must be classed as folk-lore,³ and not as natural history, it is hard not to admire his moral courage in putting them on record, and the earnestness with which he attempts to extract a nucleus of

¹ *Norges naturlige historie* (Copenhagen, 1752, 1753).

² Bruce did not suffer fools gladly. After his return from Abyssinia, one of the Edinburgh intelligentsia once referred, in company, to his (perfectly true) account of how he had seen natives cutting, and devouring, raw steaks from a living cow. This the arm-chair traveller stigmatised as 'absurd and impossible.' Bruce immediately gave him the option of eating a raw steak, then and there, or of giving him the usual satisfaction (Bruce, by the way, could drill an ace at twelve paces). The steak was eaten.

³ Admittedly, some of these 'Kraken' tales — such as its being a mile in circumference — are wild exaggerations. Still, even this particular may one day find a defender; for in the British Museum (459 c. 3 — bound up in a copy of the English translation of Pontoppidan) is a MS. copy of an affidavit sworn in 1775, describing the rising and sinking, off the west coast of Scotland, of an island of this size and some 30 feet high, believed to be a veritable 'Kraken.' I can only imagine that it was a peculiar species of fog-bank.

truth from tales which he himself regarded as, *prima facie*, almost incredible.

Pontoppidan, then, although possibly over-fond of the marvellous (as we most of us are) was not the arrant romancer which, most unjustly, he has been considered ; and while he devoted a considerable section of his book to the sea-serpent or Soe Orm (sea-snake) which, by his account, had often been seen on the Norwegian coast, he seems to have done all he could to verify, as far as possible, the accounts which he received of it. (He does not claim to speak, either in this case or that of the ' Kraken,' from personal observation.)

On the other hand, he greatly resembles Herodotus in his style and cast of mind. All is fish that comes to his net ; any ' fisherman's yarn ' about the sea-serpent detesting the smell of castoreum,¹ or being born on land and taking to the sea when too big to hide in the forests, or sloughing its skin, must find a place in his book, however improbable he may admit that it appears to him. It is for this reason — his uncritical compilation and publication of a mass of statements differing greatly in value, without making any attempt to sift the grain from the chaff — that so many of his critics have laughed at the worthy Bishop of Bergen's lucubrations.

At the same time, it should be remembered that, side by side with such fables, Pontoppidan also prints a certain amount of real evidence — the sworn statements of educated persons, holding responsible positions. From these, I select the affidavit made by Pilot-General Lorenz von Ferry, and two of his men. The following is Pontoppidan's version of this²:

¹ A strong-smelling substance secreted by the beaver. It was formerly esteemed as a medicine, but is now mostly used by perfumers.

² I have generally followed the translation given in Oudemans' book, pp. 122-124. The English version of Pontoppidan (London, 1755) gives a very similar rendering.

‘ Last winter I happened to meet the Royal Commander and Pilot-General at Bergen, M. Lorenz von Ferry, and we spoke about this subject (the sea-serpent). He told me that for a long time he had doubted the existence of the sea-serpent, but that at last his experiences in 1746 had convinced him. And though I could not say anything of importance against it, he ordered to my satisfaction and that of others, two seamen, who were with him in his boat, and had seen the animal and its blood which coloured the water red after a shot of von Ferry at it, to appear before the public court of justice at Bergen. What these men confirmed on oath may be found in the following instrument which I received in original, and which I therefore think valuable enough to communicate in extenso.

‘ “ALBERT CHRISTIAN DASS, His Royal Majesty’s Stadtholder at Bergen, HANS CHRISTIAN GARTNER, His Royal Majesty’s Councillor of Justice and Commerce, at the same time Secretary of the Town, together with JAN CLIES, OLE SIMENSEN, OLE BRINCHMAND, JOERGEN KOENIG for CONRAD VON LANGE, MATTHIAS GRAM for ELIAS PETRUS TUCHSEN, CLAUS NATLER for DIDRICH HASLOP, JOCHEM FOEGH for HENRICH HIORT, and JOERGEN WIERS for HANS CHRISTIAN BYSZING, sworn citizens and additional deniers¹ there, declare, that on February the 22nd, 1751, the Procurator JOHANN REUTZ appeared before the public court of justice at Bergen, and presented a paper he had received that day, and bearing the date of the day before, from the honourable Captain and Pilot-General LORENZ VON FERRY.

‘ “And as the services of the appearer are requested in it, to supply him a judicial hearing of witnesses, concerning the event mentioned in the same paper, so the

¹ Jurymen.

appearer, being there for that purpose, pointed out two men living in this town, named NIELS PETERSEN KOPPER and NIELS NIELSEN ANGLEWIGEN, begging that these men might be admitted to a declaration on oath, that all has happened in detail as is mentioned in the paper, which he begged to be registered in the said instrument. The above-mentioned paper was read to the witnesses, and runs as follows :

Mr. JOHANN REUTZ,

Sir,

In the latter end of August, in the year 1746, as I was on a voyage, on my return from Trundheim,¹ on a very calm and hot day, having a mind to put in at Molde,² it happened that when we had arrived with my vessel within a mile of the aforesaid Molde, being at a place called Jule-Naess, as I was reading in a book, I heard a kind of murmuring voice from amongst the men at the oars,³ who were eight in number, and observed that the man at the helm kept off from the land. Upon this I enquired what was the matter, and was informed that there was a sea-serpent ahead of us. I then ordered the helmsman to keep the land again, and to come up with this creature of which I had heard so many stories. Though the fellows were under some apprehensions, they were obliged to obey my orders.

In the meantime the sea-snake passed by us, and we were obliged to turn the vessel about in order to get nearer to it. As the snake swam faster than we could row, I took my gun, which was loaded with small shot, and fired at it ; on this it immediately plunged under water. We rowed to the place where it sank down

¹ Trondhjem.

² For a later report of a sea-serpent in this vicinity, see p. 91.

³ Making a passage from Trondhjem to Molde, he was evidently not in a rowing-boat. No doubt his crew were 'sweeping' their craft along, there being no breeze blowing.

(which in the calm might be easily observed) and lay upon our oars, thinking it would come up again to the surface; however, it did not. Where the snake plunged down, the water appeared thick and red; perhaps the small shot might have wounded it, the distance being very little.

The head of this sea-serpent, which it held more than two feet above the surface of the water, resembled that of a horse. It was of a greyish colour, and the mouth was quite black, and very large.¹ It had large black eyes, and a long white mane, which hung down to the surface of the water. Besides the head and neck, we saw seven or eight folds, or coils, of this snake, which were very thick, and as far as we could guess there was a fathom's distance between each fold.

I related this affair in a certain company, where there was a person of distinction* present, who desired that I would communicate to him an authentic detail of all that happened; and for this reason two of my sailors who were present at the time and place where I saw this monster, namely, NIELS PETERSEN KOPPER, and NIELS NIELSEN ANGLEWIGEN, will appear in court, to declare on oath the truth of every particular herein set forth; and I desire the favour of an attested copy of the said description.

I remain, Sir, your obliged servant,

L. VON FERRY.

Bergen, 21st *February*, 1751.'

' "After this the above-named witnesses gave their corporal oaths,* and, with their forefinger held up

¹ Compare the cow-like, greyish-black head of the *Hilary's* creature (1917), p. 207.

* Obviously, Pontoppidan.

* So in both translations. The term 'corporal oath' is new to me; no doubt it implies a milder type of expression than that employed by sergeant-majors.

according to law, testified and declared the aforesaid letter or declaration, and every particular set forth therein, to be strictly true. A copy of the said attestation was made out for the said Procurator Reutz, and granted by the Recorder. That this was transacted in our court of justice we confirm with our hand and seals.

' " Done at Bergen, the day and place being as above :

A. C. DASS

J. CLIES

O. BRINCHMAND

M. GRAM

J. FOEGH

H. C. GARTNER

O. SIMENSEN

J. KOENIG

C. NATLER

J. WIERS " "

The picture preserved for us by this affidavit – the Stadtholder and Councillor, no doubt attired with some little ceremony ; the solemn jurors and deputy-jurors ; and the tarry mariners, each with his ' forefinger held up according to law ' – ought really to form the subject of an historical painting in the grand style. I commend the notion to some of our brighter R.A.'s.

Von Ferry certainly appears to have done all he could to put his experience on record as accurately and formally as possible. It will be noted that, by his account, he was so close to the creature that he could scarcely have mistaken its nature – at least, we may fairly assume that he did not see the usual ' school of porpoises.' With regard to the mane of which he speaks, we shall find this appendage mentioned in many later accounts, particularly that of Capt. M'Quhae, commanding H.M.S. *Dædalus*, in 1848.¹ On this point Pontoppidan, speaking of the

¹ See p. 99.

general characteristics of the Norwegian sea-serpent, remarks :

‘ . . . about the neck . . . there is a kind of mane, which looks like a parcel of sea-weeds hanging down to the water . . . ’

And here for comparison, are M’Quhae’s words, written before he ever saw Pontoppidan’s book :

‘ It (the creature seen by the *Dædalus*) had no fins, but something like a mane of a horse, or rather a bunch of seaweed, washed about its back . . . ’¹

Plate I shows a type-figure of the sea-serpent, taken from Pontoppidan (he also gives a distorted version of Bing’s drawing). This is stated to be drawn under the inspection of the Rev. Hans Stroem, and to correspond exactly with descriptions of the creature given him by two of his neighbours at Heowe, MM. Reutz and Tuchsén. It has probably been more frequently reproduced than any other drawing of the sea-serpent. But, which is more remarkable, one finds that the majority of later drawings, produced from observation by persons who, it is probable, had never seen or heard of it, resemble it closely. See, for example, Figs. 5 & 12. More explanations than one might be offered of this resemblance ; but at least it may be said that it is not inconsistent with the supposition that all are attempted representations of real creatures, closely similar in type and form.

¹ *The Times*, 14, x. 1848.

Tvende Slags Norske Søe-Orme



PLATE I.

PONTOPPIDAN'S SEA-SERPENT

NOTE.—The Norwegian superscription means 'Two Kinds of Norwegian Sea-Snake,' The lower half of the original engraving contains a figure (not reproduced here) of Egede's sea-monster.

From 'Norges naturlige historie'



CH. II. THE NEW ENGLAND SEA-SERPENT

On August 18th, 1817, the Linnean Society of Boston formed a committee 'for the purpose of collecting any evidence which may exist respecting a remarkable animal, denominated a *Sea Serpent*, reported to have been seen in and near the Harbour of Gloucester.'

Committees and similar bodies are not, as a rule, remarkable for initiative or collective intelligence; but that of the Linnean Society affords, up to a point, a refreshing exception. It numbered, fortunately, but three members.* They set to work zealously and methodically; and succeeded in collecting a considerable body of sworn testimony which, although obtained from different sources, was in close general agreement, and left little doubt that some large sea-monster of unknown type had most undoubtedly been seen off the New England coast on numerous occasions. Unfortunately, as will appear later, the Committee was not satisfied with merely collecting the facts – it set to work to explain them, and reached a somewhat ridiculous conclusion which tended, in the eyes of competent naturalists, to cast considerable doubt upon the worth of its labours.

The Committee's report was published as a small pamphlet† (now very scarce) in December 1817. It

* Massachusetts: 42° 36' N., 70° 40' W.

† John Davis, Jacob Bigelow, and Francis C. Gray.

* REPORT / of a / COMMITTEE / of the / LINNEAN SOCIETY
OF NEW ENGLAND / relative / to a large marine animal / supposed
to be / A SERPENT, / seen near Cape Ann, Massachusetts, / in / August
1817. // BOSTON: / published by Cummings and Hilliard, / No. 1,
Cornhill. // Univ. Press . . . Hilliard and Metcalf. / 1817.

Small 8vo., grey paper cover. 10¼" × 6¼". 52 pp., 2 plates.

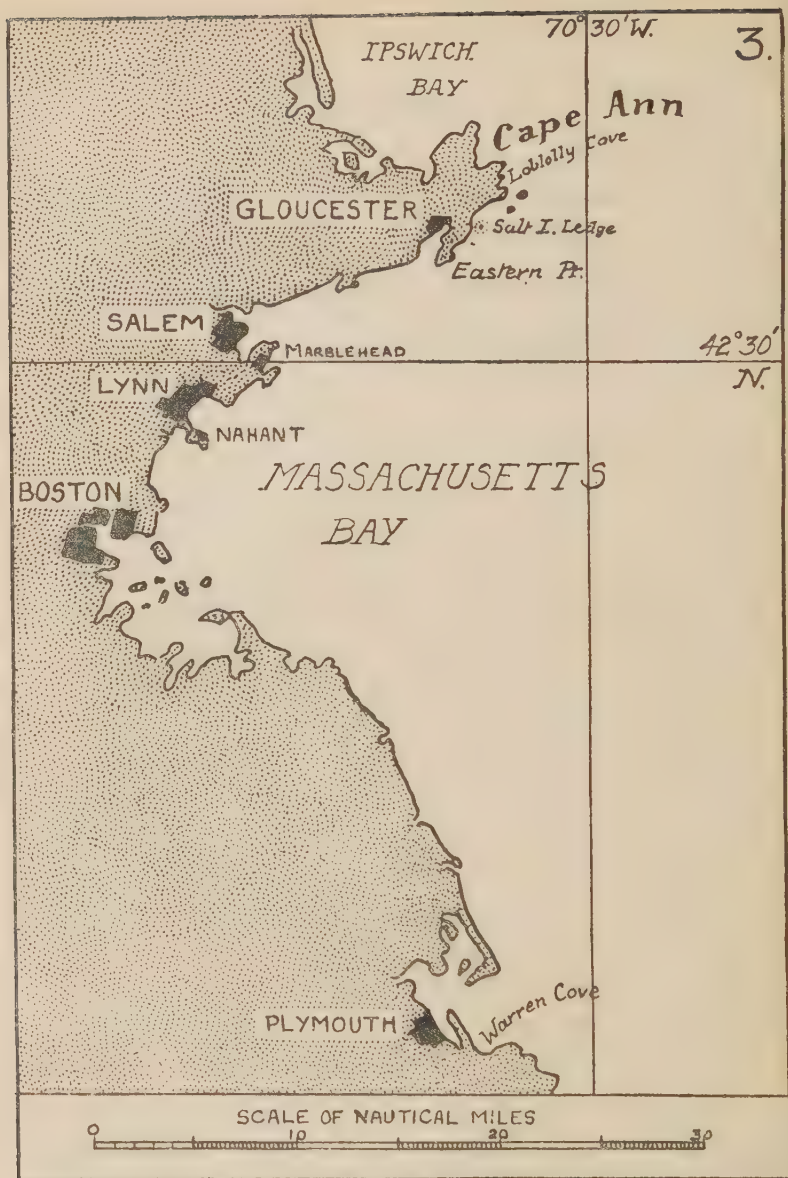


FIG. 3. MASSACHUSETTS BAY, AND VICINITY

contained, *inter alia*, the sworn depositions of twelve witnesses.¹ Before giving extracts from these, it seems worth while to reproduce the very excellent rules which the Committee laid down to govern its investigations.

' Boston, Aug. 19, 1817.

' The Committee appointed by the Linnean Society . . . have concluded on the following method of proceeding in the execution of their commission.

I. The examination to be confined to persons professing actually to have seen the animal in question.

II. Such persons to be examined as may be met with by either of the Committee, or by Hon. Lonson Nash of Gloucester, who is to be requested by a letter addressed to him from the Committee to undertake this service.

III. All testimony on the subject to be taken in writing, and after being deliberately read to the person testifying, to be signed by him, and sworn to before a magistrate. The examinations to be separate, and the matter testified by any witness not to be communicated until the whole evidence be taken.

IV. The persons testifying to be requested first to relate their recollections on the subject, which being taken down, the following questions to be proposed, if not rendered unnecessary by the statement given.

QUESTIONS

1. When did you first see this animal ?
2. How often and how long at a time ?
3. At what times of the day ?

¹ Their names, reminiscent of Widecombe Fair, were : Amos Story, Solomon Allen, Eppes Ellery, Wm. H. Foster, Matthew Gaffney, James Mansfield, John Johnston, Wm. B. Pearson, Sewall Toppin, Robert Bragg, Wm. Somerby, and Elkanah Finney.

4. At what distance ?
5. How near the shore ?
6. What was its general appearance ?
7. Was it in motion or at rest ?
8. How fast did it move, and in what direction ?
9. What parts of it were above the water and how high ?
10. Did it appear jointed or only serpentine ?
11. If serpentine, were its sinuosities vertical or horizontal ?
12. How many distinct portions were out of water at one time ?
13. What were its colour, length, and thickness ?
14. Did it appear smooth or rough ?
15. What were the size and shape of its head, and had the head ears, horns, or other appendages ?
16. Describe its eyes and mouth.
17. Had it gills or breathing holes, and where ?
18. Had it fins or legs, and where ?
19. Had it a mane or hairs, and where ?
20. How did its tail terminate ?
21. Did it utter any sound ?
22. Did it appear to pursue, avoid, or notice any thing ?
23. Did you see more than one ?
24. How many persons saw it ?
25. State any other remarkable fact.'

It will be conceded that these enquiries cover a good deal of ground, and bear a family resemblance to those set by Calverley in his 'Pickwick' examination-paper.¹ But while the Committee may be thought unduly optimistic

¹ 'Who little thinks that in which pocket, of what garment, in where, he has left what, entreating him to return to whom, with how many what, and all how big?'

in estimating the amount of information they expected to obtain, and the powers of observation possessed by the witnesses, it must be admitted that their questions were at least designed to elicit the maximum amount of available information, and that their plan of requiring the witnesses to make independent affidavits was calculated to expose, without much difficulty, anything in the nature of an attempted hoax.

To my mind, I confess that in this case the 'hoax' theory is quite untenable. The evidence was taken on oath; it is at first-hand, full, clear, and in excellent general agreement; while the witnesses were not casual strangers, but men of good character resident in the locality. I shall return later to the supposition that they may have been mistaken in what they actually saw.

And now to their story.

The 'strange marine animal,' as it is cautiously termed by the Committee, appears to have first been seen entering Gloucester harbour on or about August 6th, 1817. Gloucester, it may be remarked, was then (and is now) one of the principal fishing-ports of the United States. It stands at the head of a bay about two and a half miles long by a mile wide, opening to the south-westward.¹ The shores of the bay form a series of small coves; and at its head, fronted by two or three small islands, is a narrow inlet, forming an inner harbour. The town stands on the north-western side of this inlet. In the entrance to the main harbour are several dangerous shoals; one, close to the western shore, being Norman's Woe Rock, famous as the (supposed) resting-place of that singularly-navigated vessel the schooner *Hesperus*.²

¹ See Fig. 4.

² According to Longfellow, her captain (absorbed in smoking) failed to observe signs of approaching bad weather, and (quite rightly) declined to

The date (August 6th) when the creature was first seen entering the bay is an approximate one ; its official history, as given in the depositions, begins on August 10th.



FIG. 4. GLOUCESTER HARBOUR

accept advice on the subject from his crew. Having somewhat miraculously heard the E. Point fog-bell (dead to leeward of him, at such a distance that he could not see the light), he endeavoured to beat off a rock-bound coast against a strong gale which was blowing fair for the harbour entrance. He then lashed himself to the wheel, and expired – presumably of heart-failure, induced by excessive smoking.

‘ I, Amos Story of Gloucester, in the County of Essex, mariner, depose and say, that on the tenth day of August A.D. 1817, I saw a strange marine animal, that I believe to be a serpent, at the southward and eastward of Ten Pound Island, in the harbour in said Gloucester. It was between the hours of twelve and one o’clock when I first saw him, and he continued in sight for an hour and half. I was setting on the shore, and was about twenty rods¹ from him when he was the nearest to me.

‘ His head appeared shaped much like the head of the sea-turtle, and he carried his head from ten to twelve inches above the surface of the water. His head at that distance appeared larger than the head of any dog that I ever saw. From the back part of his head to the next part of him that was visible, I should judge to be three or four feet. He moved very rapidly through the water, I should say a mile in two, or at most, in three minutes. I saw no bunches² on his back. On this day I did not see more than ten or twelve feet of his body. . . . ’

Not only was Story the first official witness to see the creature in Gloucester Harbour, but also the last. He saw it again a fortnight later, on the morning of the day when he made his affidavit – which continues as follows :

‘ I likewise saw, what I believe to be the same animal this day, viz. the twenty third of August, A.D. 1817. This was in the morning, about seven o’clock. He then lay perfectly still, extended on the water, and I should judge that I saw fifty feet of him at least.

‘ I should judge that I was forty rods³ from him this

¹ 110 yards.

² For the explanation of this term, see the following deposition.

³ 220 yards.

day. I had a good spy-glass both days when I saw him. I continued looking at him about half an hour, and he remained still and in the same position, until I was called away. Neither his head nor tail was visible. His colour appeared to be a dark brown, and when the sun shone upon him, the reflection was very bright. I thought his body was about the size of a man's body.

AMOS STORY.'

'*Essex*. ss. Aug. 23, 1817. Personally appeared Amos Story, and made oath that the foregoing deposition by him subscribed is true, according to his best knowledge and belief.

Cor.¹ LONSON NASH, Jus. Pacis.'

It will be noticed that Mr. Nash did not subject Story to the ordeal of the 'Twenty-five Points'; at least he did not put them categorically, although the terms of the deposition suggest that it is based, to some extent, on interrogation. In taking a deposition two days earlier, he had, as will be seen, put most of the questions specifically.

'I, Solomon Allen 3d,² of Gloucester, in the County of Essex, Ship master, depose and say; that I have seen a strange marine animal, that I believe to be a serpent, in the harbour in said Gloucester.

'I should judge him to be between eighty and ninety feet in length, and about the size of a half-barrel, apparently having joints from his head to his tail. I was about one hundred and fifty yards from him, when I judged him to be of the size of a half barrel. His head formed something like the head of the rattle

¹ Abbreviation of 'Coram' — in the presence of.

² This suffix denotes that he was the third of one family to bear the same names. The custom still, I believe, obtains in the United States.

snake, but nearly as large as the head of a horse. When he moved on the surface of the water, his motion was slow, at times playing about in circles, and sometimes moving nearly straight forward. When he disappeared, he sunk apparently directly down, and would next appear at two hundred yards from where he disappeared, in two minutes. His colour was a dark brown, and I did not discover any spots upon him.

Question. When did you first see this animal ?

Answer. I saw him on the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth of August, A.D. 1817.

Q. How often, and how long at a time ?

A. I was in a boat on the twelfth inst. and was around him several times, within one hundred and fifty yards of him. On the thirteenth inst. I saw him nearly all the day, from the shore. I was on the beach, nearly on a level with him, and most of the time he was from one hundred and fifty to three hundred yards from me. On the fourteenth, I saw him but once, and had not so good a view of him.

Q. What parts of it were above the surface of the water, and how high ?

A. Its joints or bunches, appeared about eight or ten inches above the surface of the water.

Q. Did it bend its body up and down in moving, or to the right and left ?

A. He moved to the right and left.

Q. How many distinct portions of it were out of water, at one time ?

A. I should say fifty distinct portions.

Q. Did it appear smooth or rough ?

A. I should say rough and scaly.

Q. Had it ears, horns, or any other appendages ?

A. I perceived none.

Q. How did its tail terminate ?

A. He seemed to taper towards (what I thought) his tail, though I had no distinct view of his tail.

Q. Did it utter any sound ?

A. Not in my hearing.

Q. Did it appear to pursue, avoid, or notice any thing ?

A. It appeared to me to avoid the boat where I was, though afterwards, I saw him make towards a boat, in which was Mr. Gaffney and others.

Q. Did you see more than one ?

A. I did not.

Q. How many persons saw it ?

A. Twenty or thirty persons were in view of me.

Q. Did he open his mouth when you saw him, and if so, how wide ?

A. Yes, when I looked at him from the shore with a glass at about two hundred yards distance, his mouth appeared to be open about ten inches. I had no glass, when I saw him from the boat.

Q. Did he carry his head above the surface of the water ?

A. Yes, at times, about two feet, then again he would carry the top of his head just on the surface of the water.

Q. Did he turn short and quick, and what was the form of the curve that he made when he turned ?

A. He turned short and quick, and the first part of the curve that he made in turning resembled the link of a chain¹ ; but when his head came parallel with his tail, his head and tail appeared near together.

SOLOMON ALLEN 3d.'

'*Essex. ss. August 21, 1817.* Personally appeared Solomon Allen the third, and made oath that the

¹ Misprinted 'c ain' in original.

foregoing facts, by him subscribed, are true, according to his best knowledge and belief.

COR. LONSON NASH, Jus. Pacis.'

It may be noted that Mr. Nash had himself seen the creature, and that in consequence he joined issue with one or two of Allen's statements. In a letter to the Committee, dated August 28th, 1817, he remarks :

' . . . I am confident, from my own observation, that Mr. Allen is mistaken, as to the motion of the animal. His motion is vertical. I saw him, on the 14th instant, for nearly half an hour. I should judge he was two hundred and fifty yards from me, when the nearest. I saw him twice with a glass for a short time, and at other times, with the naked eye. . . .

' I think Mr. Allen is likewise mistaken, as to the distinct portions of the animal that were visible, at one time. I saw, at no time, more than eight distinct portions ; though more may have been visible ; still, I cannot believe that *fifty* distinct portions were seen, at one time. I believe the animal to be straight, and that the apparent bunches were caused by his vertical motion.'

These two points – the vertical or horizontal nature of the creature's undulations when moving, and the apparent ' bunches,' or serrations exhibited by the outline of its back – seem to have formed rather a bone of contention among both the observers and the Committee. A short digression may therefore be useful.

It was agreed on all hands that the creature, at first sight, looked like a gigantic serpent. Now serpents, of course, progress by curving their bodies laterally – they have no power of humping them vertically, as a

caterpillar does. Yet the creature seen at Gloucester seemed, to most observers, to progress by the latter method – vertical undulations – and sometimes to exhibit the same wavy outline of back even when motionless, although at other times its back appeared smooth and flat.

That it had great lateral flexibility is undeniable. Six of the twelve witnesses gave a detailed description of its appearance when turning round in the water, and all of these accounts agree exactly with Allen's : viz., that it curved its body laterally until it assumed the shape of an elongated U, the head and tail – both of which then became visible – almost touching. It is interesting to note that the creature seen by H.M.S. *Hilary* in 1917 did much the same.¹

If, in addition to this extreme lateral flexibility, the creature was also able to curve its back vertically into a series of humps, the structure of its backbone must have been truly astonishing – it must have looked like a series of universal-joints. But the depositions do not actually state this. They speak of the humps, or 'bunches' of the creature's back as rising but a very few inches above the water ; although extending, in a line, for fifty feet and upwards. Coupled with the fact that the back sometimes showed a smooth outline, devoid of 'bunches,' it seems much more probable that the latter were curvatures of the skin, produced at will by muscular contraction, and not actual undulations of the backbone,²

¹ See p. 207.

² In the case of the once-celebrated 'Animal of Stronsa' (see p. 246), Everard Home, discussing a rough sketch of this (Fig. 26) and proceeding on the assumption that it was really a basking-shark (as it probably was), remarked (*Phil. Trans.* 1809) '... The contortions towards the tail are such, as the intervertebral joints could not admit of, they are therefore imaginary.' A summary, if scarcely scientific, method of dealing with inconvenient evidence !

although a small degree of vertical flexibility in this can scarcely be said to be anatomically impossible.¹

From the depositions, it appears that the creature frequented Gloucester harbour for about a fortnight, being repeatedly observed by many persons – sometimes at exceedingly close range. Its visit was not entirely devoid of incident. It will be remembered that Solomon Allen spoke of seeing it ‘make towards a boat, in which were Mr. Gaffney and others.’ Well, here is Mr. Gaffney’s account of its reception :

‘I, MATTHEW GAFFNEY, of Gloucester in the County of Essex, Ship carpenter, depose and say : That on the fourteenth day of August, A.D. 1817, between the hours of four and five o’clock in the afternoon, I saw a strange marine animal, resembling a serpent, in the harbour in said Gloucester. I was in a boat, and was within thirty feet of him. . . . I fired at him, when he was the nearest to me. I had a good gun, and took good aim. I aimed at his head, and think I must have hit him. He turned towards us immediately after I had fired, and I thought he was coming at us ; but he sunk down and went directly under our boat, and made his appearance at about one hundred yards from where he sunk. He did not turn down like a fish, but appeared to settle directly down, like a rock. . . .

Q. Did he appear more shy, after you had fired at him ?

A. He did not; but continued playing as before. . . .’

Although Mr. Gaffney complacently remarks ‘. . . I suppose there is no person in town, more accustomed to shooting, than I am,’ he seems to have been somewhat excited – at any rate, he could not definitely say whether

¹ This appears to be borne out by Fig. 18.

the creature's skin was smooth or rough, although sighting for it at thirty feet range – and it is quite on the cards that he missed his mark altogether.¹ Or his bullet may either have glanced harmlessly off the wet skin, or perforated a non-vital portion ; just as one of H.M. ships once spent an afternoon futilely bombarding with every lethal weapon she possessed – from rifles to 4.7s, – a mysterious object which finally proved to be the back-fin and upperworks of an enormous sunfish.

Nothing daunted by Gaffney's lack of success (or marksmanship), the sportsmen of Gloucester made, somewhat after the manner of Mr. Snodgrass,² several further attempts to kill or capture their strange, timid, and harmless visitor. *The Boston Weekly Messenger*³ tells us :

'... A number of persons are engaged in making a net of codlines, of sufficient strength and size to take him. It is conjectured that he has resorted to this harbour for the purpose of preying upon a very numerous shoal of herrings, which have lately appeared there. If he has been instrumental, as is supposed, in driving these herring into the harbour, he has rendered an essential service to the town.'

The town's method of requiting an 'essential service' rendered to it would appear to be a somewhat peculiar one.⁴ The report continues :

¹ Similarly, it is quite easy for a good revolver-shot, unused to close-quarter fighting, to miss his man at point-blank range.

² '... (Mr. Snodgrass) announced in a very loud tone that he was going to begin, and proceeded to take off his coat with the utmost deliberation.'

³ Thursday, 21, viii. 1817.

⁴ Another seafaring town, Venice, treated her ex-Doges in a very similar manner. The Gloucester natives would have done better to imitate those of Languedoc, who (so Pliny says) were accustomed to summon the porpoises to assist them in netting the herring, and subsequently to reward them with bread.

' . . . It is to be hoped that some vigorous efforts will be made to take this animal. If an attempt is to be made, some precaution ought to be used, lest he be frightened from the coast before the proper preparations are made for arresting (*sic*) him.

' We learn that . . . an attempt was to be made to take him yesterday, should he make his appearance.'

' This animal ' appears to have learned, from the *Messenger* or some other source, that he was imminently liable to arrest — can a warrant have been issued against him? — for he was not seen on the 21st, and a few days later we find the same paper remarking¹ :

' . . . The people of Gloucester however intend to be able to give a better account of him, if he should stay longer in their harbour. Shark hooks, variously baited, have been set afloat in the harbour, and several boats, well manned and armed, were destined to attack him on the 20th inst., if he shewed himself.'

Although the creature came and went unscathed among these nets, shark-hooks, Gaffneys, warrants, and other nuisances, it had, on August 17th, a narrow escape of being run down by a boat. Or, perhaps, it would be more correct to say that the boat had the narrow escape.

' I, JOHN JOHNSTON, jun, of Gloucester, in the County of Essex, of the age of seventeen years, depose and say : That on the evening of the seventeenth day of August, A.D. 1817, between the hours of eight and nine o'clock, while passing from the shore in a boat, to a vessel lying in the harbour of said Gloucester, I saw a strange marine animal, that I believe to be a serpent, lying extended on the surface of the water. His

¹ Thursday, 28, viii. 1817.

length appeared to be fifty feet at least, and he appeared straight, exhibiting no protuberances. Capt. John Corliss and George Marble were in the boat with me.¹ We were within two oars length of him when we first discovered him, and were rowing directly for him.

' We immediately rowed from him, and at first concluded to pass by his tail ; but fearing we might strike it with the boat, concluded to pass around his head, which we did by altering our course. He remained in the same position, till we lost sight of him. We approached so near to him that I believe I could have reached him with my oar. There was not sufficient light to enable me to describe the animal.'

(Attested like the foregoing, before
Mr. Lonson Nash.)

On the 18th, the creature was reported off Cape Ann by a passing vessel, which hurriedly cracked on all sail to get away from it ; and in the afternoon of the same day it was seen by William B. Pearson, one of the witnesses, emerging from Webber's Cove,² Gloucester harbour. He deposes :

' . . . I saw something coming out of the cove ; we hove to, not doubting but that it was the same creature that had been seen several times in the harbour. . . . The serpent passed out under the stern of our boat, towards *Ten Pound Island* ; then he stood in towards us again, and crossed our bow. We immediately exclaimed " here is the snake." From what I saw of

¹ Neither of these made a deposition. It is quite likely that, as they were apparently on the way to their ship, the latter had sailed before Nash made his enquiries.

² I have not been able to identify this cove with any certainty. There is a ' Webber's Rock ' off Cape Ann.

³ He had with him one James P. Collins.

him, I should say that he was nothing short of seventy feet in length. I distinctly saw bunches on his back, and once he raised his head out of water. The top of his head appeared flat, and was raised seven or eight inches above the surface of the water. He passed by the bow of the boat, at about thirty yards distance. His colour was a dark brown. I saw him at this time¹ about two minutes. . . .’

(Attested in the usual form.)

The creature was also seen on the 18th by Colonel T. H. Perkins, who had visited Gloucester for the purpose. He did not tender his evidence at the time, considering it to be of no great value on points of detail ; since he had at no time been within a third of a mile of the animal. The excitement caused by the *Dædalus* case, however, caused him to publish (in 1848)² a letter written on October 13th, 1820, giving a private account of his experiences.

‘Wishing to satisfy myself on a subject on which there existed a great difference of opinion, I myself visited Gloucester with Mr. Lee. . . . All the town was, as you may suppose, on the alert ; and almost every individual, both great and small, had been gratified, at a greater or less distance, with a sight of him [the sea-serpent].’

‘The weather was fine, the sea perfectly smooth, and Mr. Lee and myself were seated on a point of land’

¹ He states that he saw the creature on other occasions – particularly that on which Gaffney shot at it – but was not so well placed for getting a good view of it.

² *Boston Daily Advertiser*, November 25, 1848. The letter (written three years after the event) is dated ‘On board the ship *Ann Marie*, at sea, lat. 46, long. 44, Oct. 13th, 1820.’ The writer was returning from England to the U.S.

³ Eastern point, Cape Ann.

which projects into the harbour, and about 20 feet above the level of the water, from which we were distant about 50 or 60 feet . . .

‘ Whilst thus seated, I observed an agitation in the water at the entrance of the harbour, like that which follows a small vessel going five or six miles an hour through the water. As we knew there was no shoal where the water was thus broken, I immediately said to Mr. Lee that I had no doubt that what I had seen was the sea-serpent in pursuit of fish. Mr. Lee was not directing his attention to the spot which I speak of, and had not seen the foam of the water, the animal having immediately disappeared.

‘ In a few minutes after my exclamation, I saw on the opposite side of the harbour, at about two miles distance from where I had first seen, or thought I saw, the snake, the same object moving with a rapid motion up the harbour, on the western shore. As he approached us, it was easy to see that his motion was not that of the common snake, either on the land or in the water, but evidently the vertical movement of the caterpillar. As nearly as I could judge, there was visible at a time about 40 feet of his body. It was not, to be sure, a continuity of body, as the form from head to tail (except as the apparent bunches appeared as he moved through the water) was seen only at three or four feet asunder. It was very evident, however, that his length must be much greater than what appeared, as, in his movement, he left a considerable wake in his rear.

‘ I had a fine glass, and was within from one-third to half a mile of him. The head was flat in the water, and the animal was, as far as I could distinguish, of a chocolate colour. I was struck with an appearance in the front part of the head like a single horn, about

nine inches to a foot in length, and of the form of a marline-spike. There were a great many people collected by this time, many of whom had before seen the same object, and the same appearance. From the time I first saw him until he passed by the place where I stood, and soon after disappeared, was not more than fifteen or twenty minutes.

‘I left the place fully satisfied that the reports in circulation, although differing in details, were essentially correct.’

The famous geologist Sir Charles Lyell, in a work published in 1850¹, writes as follows :

‘... Colonel Perkins, of Boston, had the kindness to lay before me his notes, made in July (*sic*), 1817, when he saw the animal. He counted fourteen projections, six feet apart, on the back, which he imagined to be vertical flexures of the body when in motion ; but he also saw the body bent horizontally into the figure of the letter S. It was of a chocolate brown colour, the head flat, and about a foot across. . . .’

He also remarks (p. 140) :

‘After the year 1817, every marvellous tale was called in the United States a snake story ; and when Colonel Perkins went to Washington twenty years ago, and was asked if he had ever known a person who had seen the sea serpent, he answered that he was one of the unfortunate individuals who saw it himself.’

Perkins re-visited Cape Ann a few days later, but was disappointed in his hopes of seeing the creature again. But he obtained an interesting statement as to its habits :

¹ *A Second Visit to the United States of North America*, vol. i., p. 138.

‘ While at Cape Ann I talked with many persons who had seen the serpent, and among others with a person of the name of Mansfield, one of the most respectable inhabitants of the town. His account to me was, that a few days before, as he was taking a ride with his wife in a chair,¹ the road taking them close to a bank which overlooks the harbour (and is nearly a perpendicular precipice), he saw an uncommon appearance, which induced him to descend from the carriage, when he saw the sea-serpent, in which until then he had been an unbeliever. The animal was stretched out, partly over the white sandy beach, which had four to five feet of water upon it, and lay partly over the channel.

‘ He desired his wife to get out of the chair, which she did. He said that he had made up his mind as to the length of the snake, but wished the opinion of his wife on the same subject. He asked her what she would consider his length ; she answered that she could not undertake to say how many feet in length he was, but that she thought him as long as the wharf behind their house, an object with which she had always been familiar. Mr. Mansfield said he was of the same opinion. The wharf is 100 feet in length. It is to be observed that the person above spoken of had been such an unbeliever in the existence of this monster, that he had not given himself the trouble to go from his house to the harbour when the report was first made of such an animal being there.’

It is unfortunate that, having such opportunities for close observation, Mr. Mansfield did not communicate further details of the creature. Another, but much vaguer, report of its having been seen on the shore² is referred to

¹ *I.e.*, a chaise — like the celebrated ‘ One Hoss Shay.’

² See also the account of the *Moha-Moha*, p. 180.

by Mr. Lonson Nash in his letter of August 28th to the Committee :

‘ I have seen and conversed with the woman, who was said to have seen the serpent dormant on the rocks . . . but she can give no material evidence. She says that she saw something, resembling a large log of wood, on the rocks, on the extreme eastern point of Ten Pound island (a small island in our harbour,) resting partly on the rocks, and partly in the water. The distance was about half a mile. She took a glass, looked at the object and saw it move. Her attention was for a short time arrested, by some domestic avocation, and when she looked for the object again, it had disappeared.’

The last official witness to see the creature in or near Gloucester harbour was Amos Story, who saw it on August 23rd, and whose statement on the subject has already been quoted. But what was, in all probability, the same monster¹ was seen five days later eastward of Cape Ann, heading away from Gloucester, and passing rapidly north-eastward along the coast. It was first observed by Robert Bragg, a seaman of the schooner *Laura* of Boston, about 10 a.m. on August 28th, 1817. Here is an extract from his deposition – to which he made oath (as did another seaman, William Somerby, and Sewall Toppan, the *Laura's* master), at Suffolk, Boston, on August 30th, 1817, before ‘ Jos. May, Jus. Pacis.’

‘ . . . the vessel being becalmed, looking at the windward, I saw something break the water, and coming very fast towards us ; I mentioned it to the man at helm, William Somerby ; the animal came about 28

¹ All the depositions agree that only one creature was ever seen at a time.

or 30 feet from us, and passed very swiftly by us ; he left a very long wake behind him.

‘ About six inches in height of his body and head were out of water, and as I should judge about 14 or 15 feet in length. He had a head like a serpent, rather larger than his body and rather blunt ; did not see his eyes ; when astern of the vessel about 30 feet, he threw out his tongue about two feet in length ; the end of it appeared to me to resemble a fisherman’s harpoon ; he raised his tongue several times perpendicularly, or nearly so, and let it fall again. He was in sight about ten minutes.

‘ I think he moved at the rate of 12 or 14 miles an hour ; he was of a dark chocolate colour, and from what appeared out of water I should suppose he was about two and a half feet in circumference ; he made no noise ; his back and body appeared smooth ; a small bunch on each side of his head, just above his eyes ; he did not appear to be at all disturbed by the vessel ; his course was in the direction for the Salt Islands¹ ; his motion was much swifter than any whale that I have ever seen, and I have seen many – did not observe any teeth ; his motion was very steady, a little up and down.’

Somerby’s deposition agrees with Bragg’s in all essentials, but he adds :

‘ . . . I saw one of his eyes as he passed ; it appeared very bright, and about the size of the eye of an ox.’

and he concludes :

‘ . . . Have often seen whales at sea. The motion of this animal was much swifter than that of any whale.

¹ Some two miles eastward of Gloucester town. See Fig. 4.

The motion of the body was rising and falling as he advanced, the head moderately vibrating from side to side. The colour of his tongue was a light brown.'

The account given by Captain Toppan contains less detail. He remarks :

' . . . I heard one of my men call to the man at the helm " what is this coming towards us " ; being engaged forward, I took no further notice till they called again - I then got on top of the deck load, at which time¹ I saw a singular kind of animal or fish, which I had never before seen, passing by our quarter, at distance of about forty feet, standing along shore.'

His details agree, as far as they go, with Bragg's ; but he explains :

' . . . I saw him much less time than either of the others, and not in so favourable a position to notice his head. ' I have been to sea many years, and never saw any fish² that had the least resemblance to this animal.'

The depositions made by the *Laura's* crew are the last sworn testimony printed by the Committee : but they also gave, as an appendix to the main body of evidence, a letter from one Thomas Hertell, of Long Island Sound, stating that a creature very similar to the Gloucester monster had been seen by a Mr. Guion near Rye Point,

¹ Toppan gives the time and place of the encounter as 9 a.m., about 2½ miles east of Cape Ann. Bragg says, about 10 a.m., 1½ miles : Somerby, about 10 a.m., 2 miles. For the crew of a small coaster, the discrepancies are natural enough, the statements being based on rough personal estimates ; had the story been concocted, such details would probably have been in closer agreement.

² A whale, of course (*pace* Herman Melville) is not a fish ; but, earlier, he remarks ' . . . I have seen whales very often ; his motion was much more rapid than whales, or any other fish I have ever seen.'

in that Sound, on Friday, October 3rd, 1817 ; and (this time by Hertell himself) two days later.

It may also be mentioned that, as a preliminary to the Gloucester evidence, the Committee inserted an affidavit by Captain Elkanah Finney, of Plymouth (Mass.), deposing that he and his son had seen the Gloucester creature, or another of very similar appearance and size, fishing off Warren's Cove, Plymouth, on or about June 20th, 1815. It was seen on two consecutive days ; and was scrutinised for a considerable time, through a good telescope, at a distance not exceeding a quarter of a mile. While thus observed, it was very well placed for scrutiny, lying ' entirely still on the surface of the water.' Here is Finney's description :

' His appearance in this situation was like a string of buoys. I saw perhaps thirty or forty of these protuberances or bunches, which were about the size of a barrel. The head appeared to be about six or eight feet long, and where it was connected with the body was a little larger than the body. His head tapered off to the size of a horse's head. I could not discern any mouth. But what I supposed to be his under jaw had a white stripe extending the whole length of the head, just above the water.

' While he lay in this situation, he appeared to be about a hundred or a hundred and twenty feet long. The body appeared to be of a uniform size. I saw no part of the animal which I supposed to be a tail. I therefore thought he did not discover to me his whole length. His colour was a deep brown or black. I could not discover any eyes, mane, gills, or breathing holes. I did not see any fins or legs. The animal did not utter any sound, and it did not appear to notice

anything. It remained still and motionless for five minutes or more.'

Finney swore to this deposition at Plymouth (which, it may be noted, is about forty miles southward of Gloucester) on October 2nd, 1817, before 'Nathaniel M. Davis, Jus. Peace.' He had obviously been asked the Committee's twenty-five questions ; and a letter enclosing the deposition¹ specifically stated this, and also remarked :

'His (Capt. Finney's) deposition is impartial and unbiassed – and agrees uniformly with his first declarations in 1815² – besides he has not read, whatever he may have heard, of the Cape Ann descriptions ; he has been from his youth accustomed to a seafaring life – in the fishing employ, and in foreign voyages – has frequently seen whales, and almost every species of fish.'

If we include Finney's deposition with the others, and analyse the whole, it is possible to make out fairly accurately to what extent the Committee obtained satisfactory answers to their twenty-five questions. I have made a complete analysis, but it is dry reading, and I propose only to give a few of the leading results.

One creature only was seen. It frequented Gloucester harbour from August 10th (or, possibly, a few days earlier) to August 23rd, after which it proceeded northward, being seen *en route* on August 28th, and in Long Island Sound on October 3rd and 5th. It was observed by many persons simultaneously, for periods ranging from a few minutes to two hours and upwards, and at distances varying from a few feet to a mile.

¹ Signed 'S. Davis' – who may have been a son of the J.P.

² I have not been able to trace these declarations.

It was seen at all times of the day, sometimes in rapid motion, sometimes at rest. When moving, it appeared to curve its back in vertical undulations ; when at rest, its back seemed, at times, to be undulating, and at others smooth. It presented the appearance of an enormous serpent, of a black or dark-brown colour, its body (so far as this could be seen) having a diameter of something under three feet, tapering slightly towards the extremities. Its length was variously assessed at from seventy to one hundred and twenty feet. Its skin appeared smooth to most of the witnesses, but rough to two.

The head was generally described as like a serpent's. Three witnesses deposed to seeing a long tongue projected almost vertically from the mouth. One witness only spoke of seeing the eye, bright and resembling that of an ox. No legs, fins, gills or mane were observed. There was great unanimity of opinion as to the monster's extreme lateral flexibility.

It appeared to take little notice of surrounding objects, human beings, and even gunshots. It was not heard to utter any sounds. On two occasions it was seen, or believed to be seen, lying partly on the shore and partly in the water.

It is, I think, difficult for any person of unbiased mind to read through the depositions without being struck by their weight and general agreement. Something of the latter, no doubt, must be regarded as artificial. Had the witnesses made entirely independent statements, one would not expect to find them all deposing, with only the slightest of verbal changes, that they had seen 'a strange marine animal,' which they 'believed to be a serpent.' One imagines that this formula was submitted to them—in substitution, possibly, for some much more terse and vigorous description—by Mr. Lonson Nash ;

and that they accepted it as sufficiently conveying their meaning. Broadly speaking, one imagines that while Nash probably acted up to the spirit of his instructions, directing 'the examinations to be separate, and the matter testified by any witness not to be communicated until the whole evidence be taken,' he performed (perhaps unconsciously) the functions of a compiler and editor, bringing the various accounts into a slightly misleading state of general uniformity—uniformity of language, be it noted, not of fact. I do not suggest that he took any liberties with the reported facts—his comments on Allen's evidence are sufficient proof that he did not.

The evidence afforded by the depositions is, as already remarked, entitled to very serious consideration. Unfortunately, the Committee went out of their way to stultify the valuable work which they had performed. Not content with merely collecting testimony—a task which they had accomplished most admirably—they cast about for a hypothesis which should explain this, and be incorporated in their report. Such an hypothesis, accordingly, will be found appended to the depositions; and a very singular one it is.

About a month after the 'strange marine animal' had quitted Gloucester harbour, a small black snake of somewhat curious appearance was found by two boys on the beach at Loblolly Cove.¹ Alarmed, they summoned their father. This brave fellow attacked the savage reptile—which was fully three feet long—with a pitchfork, and ultimately slew it. It was bought by a resident named Beach, who presented it to the Committee; apparently on the slender chance that its appearance might in some way be connected with the monster recently seen in the harbour. It appears that the local

¹ On the east side of Cape Ann peninsula. See Fig. 3.

pothouse-pundits were firmly of opinion that the latter had visited Gloucester's shores to deposit its eggs thereon.

The Committee received the snake, and the suggestion, with great gravity. They examined and dissected the carcase, and were delighted to find that its back exhibited a series of small humps, or bunches. Nothing further, surely, was necessary. Devoting some four pages of their report to a minute comparison of the snake's anatomy with the reported characteristics of the 'strange marine animal,' they concluded as follows :

'On the whole, as these two animals agree in so many conspicuous, important and peculiar characters, and as no material difference between them has yet been clearly pointed out, excepting that of size, the Society will probably feel justified in considering them individuals of the same species, and entitled to the same name, until a more close examination of the great Serpent shall have disclosed some difference of structure, important enough to constitute a specific distinction.'

Holding this remarkable opinion, they christened their newly-acquired specimen *Scioliophis Atlanticus*, and appended to their report an anatomical description of it, illustrated by two plates. By so doing, they made a rod for their own backs ; since European naturalists, headed by H.M.D. de Blainville,¹ immediately pointed out to them that their juvenile sea-serpent was nothing more than a common black snake (*Coluber constrictor*) in a diseased condition. Moreover, since the Committee had gone out of their way to assert a close connection between their

¹ *Journal de Physique* . . . , vol. lxxxvi. (Paris, 1818).

small, common land-snake and the huge sea-creature seen off Gloucester, it is scarcely surprising that those competent to form an opinion should have concluded that persons capable of so egregious a blunder in a simple point of identification were not the safest guides to accurate information regarding a strange and huge creature of unknown species which they had not personally examined.

For good reason, therefore, scientific men in general received the Committee's report with a 'calmness bordering on indifference.' The vulgar, on the other hand, were at no loss to suggest, in pretty plain language, that the Gloucester monster was a myth, and that those who professed to have seen it were drawing the long bow. This, of course, was almost inevitable. The story was strange and improbable; it rested on the assertions of a comparatively small number of persons living in the same town; and it provided their less-favoured neighbours with a most excellent means of poking fun at Gloucester credulity and vaunting their own superior perspicacity and commonsense. In consequence, the sober tales of the Gloucester witnesses were, in no long time, distorted, parodied and (to a great extent) laughed out of court. Practical jokers sent in marvellous reports of apocryphal 'sea-serpents'; not supporting – or, indeed, designed to support – the slightest examination. The Press, with one or two honourable exceptions, followed on the same side – after its fashion. And about a year after the 'sea-serpent's' last appearance off Gloucester an event occurred which, designedly or not, helped materially to throw ridicule on the whole matter.

I am uncertain whether it should be regarded as a malicious hoax, a misfired practical joke, or an honest blunder. Personally, I incline to the second hypothesis.

Here are the facts, as related by Colonel Perkins many years afterwards¹ :

' . . . As it happened, a circumstance took place which did not do much credit to the actors in it, but which served to fortify the unbelief of our southern brethren. Believing that the possession of the sea-serpent would be a fortune to those who should have him in their power, many boats were fitted out from Cape Ann and other places in the neighbourhood of his haunts, armed with harpoons and other implements, and manned with persons used to the whale fishery, in hopes of getting near enough to him to fasten their harpoons in his side.

' Among others a Captain Rich of Boston, took command of a party, which was fitted out at some expense, and went into the bay,² where they cruised along shore two or three days without seeing the serpent. With a view, however, to keeping the joke from themselves, they . . . spread a report that they had caught the serpent, or what had been taken for one, and that he was to be seen at a place³ mentioned in the advertisement.⁴

' Thousands were flocking to see this wonder, when it was found to be no other than a large horse macquerel,⁵ which (though a great natural curiosity, weighing sometimes 600 or 700 pounds) very much disappointed those, who had been induced to visit it. Those who had declared their disbelief of the existence of the Sea-serpent amongst ourselves were delighted to find their opinions were confirmed, and gave themselves great

¹ *Boston Daily Advertiser*, 25, xi. 1848.

² Massachusetts Bay. See Fig 3.

³ At Boston.

⁴ In the *Boston Daily Advertiser*, and other local papers, 3, ix. 1819.

⁵ Or tunny.

credit for their judgment and discrimination. The report spread from Boston to New Orleans, that what had been thought by some persons to be a sea-serpent had proved to be a horse macquerel, and even those who had been believers now supposed that those who had reported that they had seen the serpent had either misrepresented or had been themselves deceived. As no report of the snake having been seen after the capture of the macquerel was made, during that year, Captain Rich had the laugh with him, until circumstances, which have transpired since, have borne rather against him.'

It is fair to add, though, that Captain Richard Rich protested in print, and immediately, against the general impression that he had tried to perpetrate a silly hoax. Writing in the *Boston Weekly Messenger* of September 17th, 1818, he contended that he had repeatedly observed, in the course of his cruise in Massachusetts Bay, the appearance of a creature similar to that seen off Gloucester the year before — that he had finally captured it — and that it had proved to be a tunny. He continues :

' . . . If I am asked — how is it possible for a Fish like this to produce such a wonderful appearance, I can only answer : " His peculiar movement and his velocity produced a greater deception than I ever saw before, and the describing his body as being like kegs fastened together, struck me so forcibly, that had I not followed it up and discovered the deception, I should have given my testimony to the long list already given, of the existence of a Sea Serpent on our coast."

' I now take my leave of the public, hoping they will do me the justice to say that I used no deception.

' RICHARD RICH.'

I have a strong impression that the public took no such action. The discrepancies between Rich's assertions – and his tunny – and the Gloucester depositions are more than Apella himself could stomach.

As Perkins notes, the dime-show staged by Rich put an end, for a time, to the reports of sea-serpents off the New England coast. Rich's joke, if it were a joke, had obviously fallen exceedingly flat; the public was no longer amused by hoaxes, and these in their turn had effectually discredited, in advance, any further similar reports. For two years, such reports are scarce and vague. Oudemans has collected one or two (one of which, to my mind, is most unquestionably a hoax¹) but with a single exception they are vague, and carry no weight. The exception is an affidavit made at Essex, Mass., on June 9th, 1819, by Hawkins Wheeler, captain of the sloop *Concord*, and Gersham Bennett, one of his men. They deposed that on Monday, June 6th, 1819, about 6 a.m., they passed, at a distance of a hundred yards or so, a creature resembling, in almost every detail,^{*} that seen off Gloucester two years earlier. It was in view for two periods of about five minutes, being sighted on the weather bow and, after a period of submersion, re-appearing on the weather quarter. The ship at this time was about midway between Cape Cod and Cape Ann. The depositions are in good agreement – I regard them as inferior to those sworn at Gloucester only in that they were probably not made independently.

¹ His No. 52 (*The Great Sea-Serpent*, p. 195).

^{*} I have paraphrased the evidence, to avoid repetition. The only discrepancy is that the eyes, hardly visible to the Gloucester observers, are stated to have been prominent, and to have '... stood out considerably from the surface, resembling in that respect the eyes of a toad.' The full text of the deposition will be found in Silliman's *American Journal of Science*, vol. ii. (Boston, 1820).

Colonel Perkins' somewhat obscure reference to the 'circumstances, which have transpired since,' which bore against the sceptical Captain Rich, probably relates to the events at Nahant in August 1819 ; when a creature, agreeing with the previously-quoted accounts, was repeatedly seen, and closely observed, by hundreds of witnesses. The best account which I have found is that given in a letter from James Prince, Marshal of the district, to the Hon. Judge Davis.¹ It is dated Nahant, August 16th, 1819 (Tuesday). Nahant, it may be stated, like Gloucester, is within Massachusetts Bay (see Fig. 3). Marshal Prince writes clearly, but somewhat copiously ; I have abridged his letter a good deal.

' Dear Sir,

' I presume I may have seen what is generally thought to be the SEA-SERPENT . . . from a desire that my name may not sanction anything beyond what was presented and passed in review before me, I will now state that, which, in the presence of more than two hundred other witnesses, took place near the long beach of Nahant on Saturday morning last². . . .

' Mr. Smith informed us, the Sea Serpent had been seen the evening before at Nahant beach . . . I was glad to find that I had brought my *famous mast-head spy-glass* with me as it would enable me from its form and size, to view him to advantage if I might be so fortunate as to see him. On our arrival on the beach, we associated with a considerable number of persons on foot and in chaises ; and very soon an animal of the fish kind made his appearance.

¹ *Boston Weekly Messenger*, 26, viii. 1819.

² August 13th, 1819.

'His' head appeared about three feet out of water ; I counted thirteen bunches on his back — my family thought there were fifteen — he passed three times at a moderate rate across the bay. . . . The first view of the animal occasioned some agitation, and the novelty perhaps prevented that precise discrimination which afterwards took place — as he swam up the bay, we and the other spectators moved on, and kept nearly abreast of him ; he occasionally withdrew himself under water, and the idea occurred to me that his occasionally raising his head . . . was to take breath, as the time he kept under water was on an average about eight minutes ;

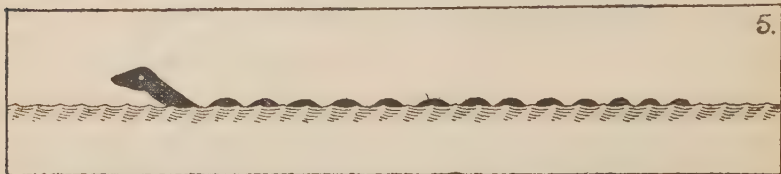


FIG. 5. MARSHAL PRINCE'S SKETCH

From *The Boston Weekly Messenger*, 26, viii. 1819

and after being accustomed to view him, we became more composed, and his general appearance was as above delineated.* . . . I had seven distinct views of him from the long beach so called, and at some of them the animal was not more than an hundred yards distance. . . . I proceeded on towards Nahant ; but on passing the second beach . . . we were again gratified beyond even what we saw in the other bay ; which I concluded he had left in consequence of the number of boats in the offing in pursuit of him — the noise of whose oars must have disturbed him, as he appeared to us to be a

* Here, and elsewhere in this chapter, it may be noted that such use of 'him' and 'his' is a figure of speech. Oudemans considers that the New England creature or creatures were females, as they had no mane !

* See Fig. 5.

harmless timid animal. We had here more than a dozen different views of him, and each similar to the other ; one however so near, that the coachman exclaimed, " Oh, *see his glistening eye !* " . . .

' I feel satisfied . . . that he is sixty feet long, unless the ripple of his wake deceived me — nor, my dear sir, do I undertake to say he was of the Snake or Eel kind, though this was the general impression. . . . Certain it is, he is a very strange animal. I have been accustomed to see Whales, Sharks, Grampuses,¹ Porpoises, and other large fishes, but he partook of none of the appearances of either of these. The Whale and the Grampus would have spouted — the Shark never raises his head out of the water, and the Porpoise skips and plays ; neither have such appearances on their backs or such a head as this animal. The Shark it is true has a fin on his back, and often, the fluke of his tail is out of the water ; but these appendages would not display the form, and certainly not the number of protuberances, which this animal exhibited ; nor is it the habit of the Shark to avoid a boat.

' The water was extremely smooth, and the weather clear : we had been so habituated to see him, that we were cool and composed — the time occupied was from a quarter past eight to half past eleven — a cloud of witnesses exceeding two hundred, brought together for a single purpose, were all alike satisfied and united as to appearances. . . . I must conclude there is a strange animal on our coast. . . . "

Here is a similar statement² made by another witness of standing, Mr. Nathan D. Chase, of Lynn.

¹ Or ' killer ' whales.

² This, and the following three accounts, are taken from an article entitled ' The Great Unknown,' by J. B. Holder, in the *Century Magazine*, vol. xlv. (June 1892). He states that he was personally acquainted with

‘ . . . I saw him on a pleasant, calm summer morning of August, 1819, from Long Beach, Lynn, now called Nahant. The water was smooth, and the creature seemed about a quarter of a mile away ; consequently we could see him distinctly, and the motion of his body. Later in the day I saw him again off Red Rock. He then passed along about one hundred feet from where I stood, with head about two feet out of the water. His speed was about that of an ordinary steamer.

‘ What I saw of his length was about sixty feet. It was difficult to count the humps, or undulations, on his back, as they did not all appear at once. This accounts in part for the varied descriptions given of him by other parties. His appearance on the surface was occasional and but for a short time. . . . This is the best description I can give of him from my own observation. I saw the creature just as truly, though not quite as clearly, as I ever saw anything. I have no doubt that this uncommon, strange rover, which was seen by hundreds of men and boys, is a form of snake, Plesiosaurus, or some such form of marine animal.

‘ Five other persons have given definite testimony besides myself. Hon. Amos Lawrence of Boston, James Prince of Boston, Benjamin F. Newhall of Saugus, and John Marston of Swampscott.

‘ NATHAN D. CHASE.’

Prince’s testimony has already been given. Of the others mentioned by Chase, the Hon. Amos Lawrence writes :

‘ I have not any doubt of the existence of the sea-serpent since the morning he was seen off Nahant. . . .’

all four witnesses, and had the highest opinion of their truthfulness and reliability. It is fair to remark, though, that Chase’s account is taken from a letter written in 1881 — sixty-two years after the event.

Newhall states :

‘ . . . As he approached the shore about 9 A.M., he raised his head apparently about six feet, and moved very rapidly. I could see the white spray on each side of his neck, as he plunged through the water. He came so near as to startle many of the spectators, and then suddenly retreated. As he turned short, the snake-like form became apparent, the body bending like an eel. I could see plainly what appeared a succession of humps upon the back.’

And Marston, an experienced fisherman, relates :

‘ While walking over Nahant Beach in common with many others who had been aroused by the excitement, I saw in the water, within two or three hundred yards of the shore, a singular-looking fish in the form of a serpent. His head was out of water, and he remained in view about twenty minutes, when he swam off towards King’s Beach. I should say that the creature was at least eighty feet in length. I saw the entire body, not his wake. It would rise in the water with an undulating motion, and then all his body would sink except his head. This would be repeated. The sea was quite calm at the time.

‘ I have been constantly engaged in fishing since my youth, but never saw anything like this before.’

I cannot discover that the creature was again seen off Nahant, but the same, or a very similar one, was observed in Gloucester harbour on August 26th (a fortnight later), by a boat’s crew of the U.S. schooner *Science*, then engaged in surveying the harbour. The following account is from a letter written by one of the observers,

the Rev. Cheever Felch of the U.S.S. *Independence*, to the editor of the *Boston Centinel*¹ :

Gloucester, August 26th, 1819.

' . . . we were proceeding this morning down the harbor, in the schooner's boat ; when abreast of Dallivan's Neck, William T. Malbone, Esq. commander of the schooner, seeing some appearance on the water, said — "*there is your Sea-Serpent*," meaning it as a laugh on me, for believing in its existence ; but it proved to be no joke.

' The animal was then between thirty and forty yards distance from us. Mr. Malbone, Midshipman Blake, myself, and our four boatmen, had a distinct view of him. He soon sunk, but not so deep but we could trace his course. He rose again within twenty yards distance of us, and lay some time on the water. He then turned, and steered for Ten Pound Island ; we pulled after him, but finding that he was not pleased with the noise of our oars, they were laid in, and the boat skulled.² We again approached very near him. He continued some length of time, plying between Ten Pound Island and Stage Point.

' As he often came near the Point, we thought we could get a better view of him there, than from the boat, of which he seemed suspicious. Mr. Malbone and myself landed ; and the boat was sent to order the schooner down, for the purpose of trying what effect a twelve pound carronade would have upon him.

' He did not remain long after we landed, so that I was unable to effect my intention, of ascertaining, accurately, his length, with my instruments. From my

¹ *Silliman's Journal* . . . , vol. ii.

² Sculled — propelled from the stern by a single oar, moved like a fish's tail.

knowledge of aquatic animals, and habits of intimacy with marine appearances, I could not be deceived. We had a good view of him, except the very short period while he was under water, for half an hour. —

‘His colour is a dark brown, with white under the throat. His size, we could not accurately ascertain, but his head is about three feet in circumference, flat and much smaller than his body. We did not see his tail; but from the end of the head to the farthest protuberance, was not far from one hundred feet. I speak with a degree of certainty, from being much accustomed to measure and estimate distances and length. I counted fourteen bunches on his back, the first one, say ten or twelve feet from his head, and the others about seven feet apart. They decreased in size towards the tail. These bunches were sometimes counted with, and sometimes without a glass. Mr. Malbone counted thirteen, Mr. Blake thirteen and fourteen, and the boatmen about the same number.

‘His motion was sometimes very rapid, and at other times he lay nearly still. He turned slowly, and took up considerable room in doing it. He sometimes darted under water, with the greatest velocity, as if seizing prey. The protuberances were not from his motion, as they were the same whether in slow or rapid movement. His motion was partly vertical and partly horizontal. . . .

‘I have given you in round numbers, one hundred feet, for his length, that is, what we saw; but I should say he must be one hundred and thirty feet in length, allowing for his tail. There were a considerable number of birds about the Sea Serpent, as I have seen them about a Snake on shore. That there is an aquatic animal in the form of a Snake, is not to be doubted. Mr. Malbone, till this day, was incredulous.

No man would now convince him, there was not such a being. The sketch or picture of Marshal Prince,¹ is perfectly correct. I could not, with my own pencil, give a more correct likeness.

‘With respect,

‘your obedient servant,

‘CHEEVER FELCH.

‘MAJOR B. RUSSELL.’

I think it will be admitted that this is a clear and valuable statement. It is the work of a man of education, of some nautical experience, interested in natural history, and engaged in marine surveying – a job which calls for accuracy and good eyesight. Moreover, it is written on the spot and immediately after the event. It is to be wished that Mr. Felch had collected and recorded the observations of his companions; the only collateral evidence which I have been able to trace is a statement made by Malbone’s commanding officer, Captain W. C. Bolton, U.S.N., many years afterwards – in 1846. It was published in 1848,² soon after the *Dædalus* case had stimulated public interest in the subject.

Here is Captain Bolton’s statement, in a letter to Colonel Perkins. It must be premised that it contains one or two inaccuracies. The actual sighting of the monster, however, is well confirmed.

‘In the year 1817 I was first lieutenant of the *Independence*, of 74 guns, then lying in the harbour of Boston.

‘In the course of the spring or summer a party of officers were detailed, by order of Commodore Bainbridge, to survey the coast of the bay, to a limited extent northeastward and outside of the lighthouse.

¹ See Fig. 5.

² *Boston Daily Advertiser*, 25, xi. 1848.

The officers selected for this duty were the sailing-master of the ship, Wm. T. Malbone, and the Rev. Cheever Felch, the instructor of the midshipmen. . . . Commodore Bainbridge, Mr. Malbone and Mr. Felch died some years ago.

‘ I recollect that on the first occasion, when the *Lynx* returned to the *Independence*, of which ship she was the tender, that Mr. Malbone reported as having seen a monstrous sea-animal, not before known to him, of the snake species ; the length doubtful, but estimated at some eighty or more feet ; and added as an accident (*sic*) that the officers and men employed in a small boat to carry out the soundings had returned in haste, and indeed alarm, to the *Lynx*, which was at anchor. These statements were corroborated by Mr. Felch, the officers and crew.

‘ Subsequently it was seen several times, by some of the party, who, being soon satisfied that it was harmless approached comparatively near, and no doubt gave me a minute description of its appearance as it presented itself to them ; but if so, the particular details have escaped my memory.

‘ These facts are all that I can with distinctness and certainty mention.

‘ WM. COMPTON BOLTON.’

Actually, the lapse of twenty-seven years had rendered Captain Bolton’s memory a little more treacherous than even he imagined. He dates the incident as 1817 instead of 1819, and speaks of the tender as the *Lynx* instead of the *Science*—points on which Felch’s statement is, of course, far better evidence. And his expression ‘ detailed to survey the coast of the bay ’ is elliptical — I imagine that he means Gloucester Bay, but he may be referring to Boston Bay. In the latter case, however, it

would scarcely have been necessary to use a schooner, as tender to the *Independence*; a proceeding which strongly suggests a detached survey, as that of Gloucester would have been, and not one performed in the immediate neighbourhood of the parent ship. Still, as already remarked, Captain Bolton confirms the fact that Felch and his other officers saw and reported the creature.

Such is, in outline, the story of a few leading events in the career of the New England sea-serpent – or sea-serpents. It is by no means the whole of the story. My friend Mr. J. G. Lockhart, in his very entertaining *Mysteries of the Sea*, has suggested that the occurrence of many sea-serpent reports in certain years, and hardly any before or afterwards, rather suggests that they had their origin in some form of mass-hallucination. But the facts are quite otherwise. Although it is undoubtedly true that for the best and fullest evidence we must look to the ‘vintage’ years of 1817 and 1819, that is not to say that other years were entirely barren. I have before me a list of reports, all relating to the New England waters. It contains particulars of appearances reported in the following years (excluding 1817 and 1819).

1751, 1777 (or 1778), 1779, 1780, 1794, 1799, 1802, 1815, 1820, 1826, 1833 (2 reports), 1835, 1839 (2 reports), 1861 and 1890.

At the same time, it is fair to say that there is one point which can justly be urged in favour of the theory of mass-hallucination. The crowds which flocked to the shore at Gloucester in 1817, and at Nahant two years later, undoubtedly went there in a state of ‘expectant attention.’ Prince, for example, says¹ ‘... a vast number

¹ See p. 61.

of people from Lynn¹, had gone to the beach that morning in hopes of being gratified with a sight of him. . . . On our arrival on the beach, we associated with a considerable number of persons . . . and very soon an animal of the fish kind made his appearance.' It might be argued that here was an excellent example of mass-delusion, for which the conditions (as, presumably, in the analogous case of the celebrated but nebulous 'Indian rope-trick') were extremely favourable. In such circumstances a whale, a shark, or a school of porpoises might well provide the raw material out of which the excited imaginations of expectant onlookers might conjure the creature which they so greatly desired to see.

Granted. But, in this event, what are we to make of the depositions taken at Gloucester and Essex, or of such evidence as Felch's? Here the theory of the 'expectant crowd' fails for two cogent reasons — there was no expectancy, and there was no crowd. Unless sheer prejudice induces us to reject this evidence altogether, we must (I submit) concede that the witnesses actually observed, sometimes at very close range and for considerable periods, a single living creature quite unlike any at present known to science. I have already given my reasons for thinking that the depositions were not, and could not have been, the work of hoaxers: and the further evidence of such witnesses as Prince and Felch amplifies the proof that the creature was not a whale, or a shark, or anything with which naturalists, experienced seamen, or fishermen were familiar. This, indeed, is obvious from the attention which the Gloucester reports (of 1817) aroused. A town whose population chiefly consists of fishermen is not usually electrified by the visit of a whale, or a shark, or a school of porpoises, or any

¹ See Fig. 3.

other common object of their daily life. There can be no doubt at all that the thing seen, whatever its nature, was a most unusual – a unique – sight.

If no other evidence had ever come to light elsewhere, I for one should be inclined to hold that that afforded by the appearances off Gloucester and Nahant in 1817 and 1819 would amply warrant the deduction that the existence of a marine animal of unknown species with serpentine head and neck, and about a hundred feet in length, was an established fact. But, as will be seen, there is a large body of similar testimony also available from other sources and later days. Let it at least be remembered to the credit of the Linnean Society of Boston that they had the scientific candour to form this conviction, and the courage to proclaim it, upwards of a century ago.

CH. III. 1820-1845 : SOME MISCELLANEOUS REPORTS

THE accounts of the New England sea-serpent form a more or less connected whole : one complying, to a considerable extent, with the three 'unities'—time, place, and action—so dear to the classical dramatists. By comparison, I am afraid that the reports collected in this chapter will be found disconnected to a bewildering or even boring extent. They form, however, a useful link in the chronological sequence of the evidence, connecting the appearances off Gloucester and Nahant in 1817 and 1819 with the celebrated case of H.M.S. *Dædalus* (1848).

The majority of them are taken from a mid-Victorian paper, the *Zoologist*. Founded in 1843, it was conducted for many years by Edward Newman, under whose management it became a recognised medium for the publication and exchange of a great deal of valuable scientific information. Amongst other matters, Newman had the courage to open his columns to current reports of sea-serpents, and to the retrospective discussion of similar reports. He expressed his views as follows¹ :

' It has been the fashion for so many years to deride all records of this very celebrated monster, that it is not without hesitation I venture to quote the following paragraphs in his defence. . . . Naturalists, or rather those who choose thus to designate themselves, set up an authority above that of fact and observation, the gist of their enquiries is whether such things *ought to be*,

¹ *Zoologist*, 1847, p. 1604.

and whether such things *ought not to be* ; now fact-naturalists take a different road to knowledge, they enquire whether such things *are*, and whether such things *are not*. The 'Zoologist,' if not in itself the fountain-head of this *fact* movement, may at least claim to be the only public advocate of that movement. . . . The only question therefore for the fact-naturalists to decide, is simply, whether all of the records now collected, can refer to whales, fishes, or any other marine animals with which we are at present acquainted.'

I am inclined to believe that this plea for scientific humility has not entirely lost its point, even to-day ; but there can be little question that in 1847 it had far more. Authority in science, like respectability on the streets of Boston, 'stalked unchecked.' The *Origin of Species* only existed as a short MS. sketch¹ ; and even so really great a man as Faraday could publicly commit himself to the astounding statement that before commencing an investigation, it was necessary to form clear ideas as to what is, and what is not, possible.² It took a bold man, whatever his qualifications, to avow that he had an open mind on an unpopular subject ; and it is in the nature of poetical justice that Newman's appeal to facts should have received, a year later, a reply — the *Dædalus* case — which became world-famous.

With this, however, we are not at present concerned. Here are a few cases, selected from a considerable number occurring between 1820 and 1848.

¹ Darwin drew this up in 1844 ; the book appeared in 1859.

² He was speaking of 'table-turning,' which he proved to be due to unconscious muscular action. But, however trivial the subject, his attitude of mind was, in this instance, unworthy of him — or of any student of nature.

‘*Lady Combermere*’ (about 1820).

The evidence for this case is slight, but apparently trustworthy. It is the statement of a naval officer, one Lieutenant George Sandford, which was discovered (after his death) in a memorandum-book, and communicated to the *Zoologist* in 1849¹ by Dr. Scott of Exeter. It appears to have been intended, by its author, for publication at the time when it was written – which is believed to be about 1820 : but I have not succeeded in finding any earlier mention of it than 1849.

‘What degree of confidence the following story may gain is to me a subject of very little consideration ; for as I can have no view of gaining anything by it, so it certainly will appear that it would hardly be worth the trouble of invention : but as a story of this sort has made its appearance among our transatlantic friends, without being at all credited, it is as likely in Europe this may have the same fate ; yet if it can afford any amusement or information for intelligent and scrutinizing minds, for their gratification I freely give it to the press, assuring them, on my sacred honour, of the truth of what I am about to describe.

‘On Sunday, about 5 P.M., being then in latitude 46, longitude 3, by dead reckoning,² observed an immense body on the surface of the water, apparently without motion, but water spouting from it, not unlike the blowing of a whale. I immediately got my glass ; and, from its rugged appearance and showing nothing where the water issued from, I began to entertain some doubts, that this must have been the *vigia*³ laid down

¹ Pp. 2459, 2460.

² *I.e.* by estimation, based on the distance covered, and direction taken, by the ship since leaving her last-observed position.

³ An oceanic shoal or rock whose position is not definitely known.

for Barenethy's rocks or the three chimneys, and, so prepared in my own mind, I directed the steering sails to be taken in and the ship prepared for going about. 'Some of my ship's company were of opinion it was a ship bottom-up : this I thought not unlikely, and went into the main cat harpens¹ to look more distinctly at it: the appearance then was still steady, but irregular. I saw neither head nor tail above the water, but a hump from one extreme resembling the rise or point of rather a triangular rock : this tapered to a distance — I certainly believe 70 or 100 feet, and the water broke over it, a little beyond it : it discharged the spout ; but nothing showing itself, undetermined in mind what it could be, or whether I should tack the ship, it all at once disappeared, and, to my great astonishment, a head and neck — resembling something of a serpent's — made its appearance, erected about six feet above the surface of the water. After taking a survey towards the vessel, it all at once vanished, leaving us full of conjecture and surprise.

'It gives me more confidence in making the above statement, as one of the seamen, whose name is Jonathan Townsend, was in the main top, and saw the creature I have described, and would feel no hesitation in taking an oath to it.

'GEORGE SANDFORD, Lieutenant R.N.'

This memorandum shows signs of having been hastily jotted down. The position is inconclusive — there are four spots on the earth's surface which satisfy the given latitude and longitude. Oudemans assumed that the latitude was north, and naturally deduced that the

¹ Cat-harpings — horizontal ropes forming a platform a few feet below the top of the mainmast.

position indicated was in the Bay of Biscay.¹ But the reference to 'Barenethy's Rocks or the Three Chimneys' shows clearly that there is some clerical or other error in the longitude. It is obvious that Sandford was using what would, in his day, have been regarded as an up-to-date chart of the North Atlantic; but at that time the 'vigias' – a more or less imaginary shoal – was a leading feature of such charts. If the captain of a modern liner were to be supplied with them, he would be startled to find deep-water routes which he had often traversed – routes recommended for such ships as his – hedged about with numbers of notes such as 'breakers reported, 1792,' 'dangerous shoal, position doubtful,' and 'rocks hereabouts.' Such imaginary 'vigias' – one or two, like the Virgin Rocks, off Newfoundland, were genuine enough – usually originated in such phenomena as a shoal of fish, a floating tree, or a cloud-bank; all of which sights were duly, if perversely, reported as shoals and reefs by faint-hearted or muddle-headed shipmasters of the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries.

In the lists of these vigias – all of which have long ceased to disfigure the North Atlantic charts – both Barenethy's Rocks and the Three Chimneys are to be found. Incidentally, the two are not identical. Barenethy's Rocks were reported (in 1726) to lie in about 46° N., $37\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ W.²: while the Three Chimneys, seen or imagined by one 'M. de Merry' at the end of the eighteenth century, were charted in various positions whose mean was approximately $47^{\circ} 54'$ N., $29^{\circ} 40'$ W. It seems probable that Sandford – or Sanford; the name is variously spelt – found that his dead-reckoning, when

¹ *The Great Sea-Serpent*, p. 224.

² Captain de Clas Fernel reported having seen them, on July 10th, 1829, in $45^{\circ} 50'$ N., $37^{\circ} 25'$ W.

plotted on his chart, put him near Barencthy's Rocks, in which case we must read his 'latitude 46, longitude 3' as 'latitude 46° N., longitude 37° W.'

Apart from this venial error, I see little to cavil at in his account. As he himself says, he had nothing to gain by inventing it – and I imagine that he ultimately withheld it from publication because he had something to lose. He had been invalided out of the Navy in 1816, and was in command of the *Lady Combermere*¹ from 1819 until 1822 inclusive. I cannot discover that he held any other command or employment until October 1846, when he was appointed to the Newgate Coast-guard station, Margate, where he died on November 12th, 1848. The fact that he does not refer to the case of the *Dædalus*, accounts of which were published about a month before his death, goes to confirm the supposition that he fell in with his sea-monster, and drew up his memorandum, soon after he took command of the *Lady Combermere*.

'*Royal Saxon*,' 1829.

After some hesitation, I give this report here, and not in the following chapter. This proceeding is chronologically correct, but suffers from the disadvantage that the report, while antedating the *Dædalus* case by eleven years, was published after it – and is based, in its details, upon it. It is sufficient here to say, that the *Dædalus* was passed, at close range, by a creature of serpentine form, with head and neck held above water, some sixty feet in visible length, and swimming at the rate of twelve to fifteen knots. The account was originally published in the *Bombay Times*, in January 1849.²

'I see in your paper of the 30th December, a paragraph

¹ She was a new ship, built in 1818.

² It is here quoted from the *Zoologist*, 1849, pp. 2458, 2459.

in which a doubt is expressed of the authenticity of the account given by Captain M'Quhae of the "great sea-serpent."

'When returning to India, in the year 1829, I was standing on the poop of the Royal Saxon, in conversation with Captain Petrie, the commander of that ship. We were at a considerable distance south-west of the Cape of Good Hope, in the usual track of vessels to this country, going rapidly along (seven or eight knots) in fine smooth water: it was in the middle of the day, and the other passengers were at lunch; the man at the wheel, a steerage passenger, and ourselves, being the only persons on the poop.

'Captain Petrie and myself at the same instant were literally fixed in astonishment by the appearance, a short distance ahead, of an animal of which no more generally correct description could be given than that by Captain M'Quhae.¹

'It passed within thirty-five yards of the ship, without altering its course in the least; but as it came right abreast of us, it slowly turned its head towards us. Apparently about one-third of the upper part of its body was above water in nearly its whole length, and we could see the water curling up on its breadth as it moved along, but by what means it moved we could not perceive.

'We watched it going astern with intense interest, until it had nearly disappeared, when my companion, turning to me with a countenance expressive of the utmost astonishment, exclaimed, "Good heavens! what can that be?" It was strange that we never thought of calling the party engaged at luncheon to witness the extraordinary sight we had seen; but the fact is, we were so absorbed in it ourselves that we never

¹ See p. 98.

* Mis-printed 'breath.'

spoke, and scarcely moved, until it had nearly disappeared.

‘ Captain Petrie, a superior and most intelligent man, has since perished¹ in the exercise of his profession : of the fate of the others then on deck I am ignorant, so the story rests on my own unsupported word, but I pledge that word to its correctness. Professor Owen’s supposition that the animal seen by the officers of the *Daedalus* was a gigantic seal I believe to be incorrect, because we saw this apparently similar creature in its whole length, with the exception of a small portion of the tail, which was under water ; and by comparing its length with that of the *Royal Saxon* (about 600 feet), when exactly alongside in passing, we calculated it to be in that, as well as in its other dimensions, greater than the animal described by Captain M’Quhae. ‘ Should the foregoing account be of any interest to you, it is at your service : it is an old story, but a true one. I am not quite sure of our latitude and longitude at the time, nor do I exactly remember the date, but it was about the end of July.

‘ R. DAVIDSON, Superintending Surgeon,
‘ Nagpore Subsidiary Force.

‘ Kamptee, 3rd January, 1849.’

This is a straightforward statement, but there is one fly in the ointment – the preposterous length ascribed to the *Royal Saxon*; not, be it noted, to the sea-serpent. Actually, the *Royal Saxon* was 120 feet long overall. I suspect a misprint in the *Bombay Times* original – where the length is plainly printed “ 600.”¹

¹ Misprinted ‘ perrshed.’

² Or Dr. Davidson may have confused the ship’s tonnage (510, register) with her length.

Halifax, (N.S.), 1833.

The following account was published in the *Zoologist*, 1847.¹ According to an editorial note, it was forwarded by Mr. W. H. Ince, who had received it from his brother, Commander J. M. R. Ince, R.N. It was written by their uncle, Mr. Henry Ince, Ordnance Storekeeper at Halifax, N.S.

‘On the 15th of May, 1833, a party, consisting of Captain Sullivan, Lieutenants Maclachlan and Malcolm of the Rifle Brigade, Lieutenant Lyster of the Artillery, and Mr. Ince of the Ordnance, started from Halifax in a small yacht for Mahone Bay, some forty miles to the westward, on a fishing excursion. The morning was cloudy, and the wind at S.S.E., and apparently rising. . . .

‘We had run about half the distance, as we supposed, and were enjoying ourselves on deck . . . when we were surprised by the sight of an immense shoal of grampuses, which appeared in an unusual state of excitement, and which, in their gambols, approached so close to our little craft, that some of the party amused themselves by firing at them with rifles.* . . . Our attention was presently diverted from the whales and “such small deer,” by an exclamation from Dowling, our man-of-war’s-man, who was sitting to leeward, of “Oh! Sirs, look here!” we were started into a ready compliance, and saw an object which banished all other thoughts save wonder and surprise.

‘At the distance of from 150 to 200 yards on our starboard bow, we saw the head and neck of some denizen of the deep, precisely like those of a common snake, in the act of swimming, the head so far elevated and thrown forward by the curve of

¹ p. 1714.

* ‘Les Anglais s’amusaient tristement, selon le façon de leur pays.’

the neck as to enable us to see the water under and beyond it. The creature rapidly passed, leaving a regular wake, from the commencement of which, to the fore part, which was out of water, we judged its length to be about eighty feet ; and this within rather than beyond the mark. . . .

‘ There could be no mistake, no delusion, and we were all perfectly satisfied that we had been favoured with a view of the “ true and veritable sea-serpent,” which had been generally considered to have existed only in the brain of some Yankee skipper, and treated as a tale not much entitled to belief. . . . It is most difficult to give correctly the dimensions of any object in the water. The head of the creature we set down at about six feet in length, and that portion of the neck which we saw, at the same ; the extreme length, as before stated, at between eighty and one hundred feet. The neck in thickness equalled the bole of a moderate-sized tree. The head and neck of a dark brown or nearly black colour, streaked with white in irregular streaks. I do not recollect seeing any part of the body.

‘ Such is the rough account of the sea-serpent, and all the party who saw it are still in the land of the living, — Lyster in England, Malcolm in New South Wales with his regiment, and the remainder still vegetating in Halifax.’

Signed by W. SULLIVAN, Captain, Rifle Brigade

A. MACLACHLAN, Lieutenant, „

G. P. MALCOLM, Ensign, „

B. O’NEAL LYSTER, Lieut., Artillery

HENRY INCE, Ordnance Storekeeper at Halifax.

I have not traced any further correspondence or enquiries, at the time, about this very definite and explicit report. It has often been quoted by later writers on the subject.

H.M.S. 'Fly,' (about 1838).¹

The following item of evidence, from the *Zoologist*², is tantalisingly brief and vague. I subjoin it, in full.

'Enormous undescribed Animal, apparently allied to the Enaliosauri, seen in the Gulf of California.'

'Captain the Hon. George Hope states that, when in H.M.S. Fly, in the gulf of California, the sea being perfectly calm and transparent, he saw at the bottom a large marine animal, with the head and general figure of the alligator, except that the neck was much longer, and that instead of legs the creature had four large flappers, somewhat like those of turtles, the anterior pair being larger than the posterior³: the creature was distinctly visible, and all its movements could be observed with ease: it appeared to be pursuing its prey at the bottom of the sea: its movements were somewhat serpentine, and an appearance of annulations or ring-like divisions of the body was distinctly perceptible.

'Captain Hope made this relation in company, and as a matter of conversation: when I heard it from the gentleman to whom it was narrated, I inquired whether Captain Hope was acquainted with those remarkable fossil animals, Ichthyosauri and Plesiosauri, the supposed forms of which so nearly correspond with what he describes as having seen alive, and I cannot find that he had heard of them; the alligator being the only animal he mentioned as bearing a partial similarity to the one in question. *Edward Newman.*'

It may be noted that the *Zoologist* appeared in two forms:

¹ See Plate II.

² 1849, p. 2356.

³ It would, of course, have been much less impressive to say that the front ones were larger than the back ones.

in monthly parts and as an annual volume. The latter contained the preceding twelve parts, an index, and a preface, written by Newman and constituting a review of the year's information. In his preface to the 1849 volume,¹ he refers to this paragraph in no measured terms :

‘ In British *Reptiles* nothing remarkable has occurred ; but I have been favoured with a communication, published in the February number (Zool. 2356), announcing the present existence of huge marine animals closely related to the Enaliosauri of by-gone ages, that appears to me in all respects the most interesting Natural-History fact of the present century, completely overturning as it does some of the most favourite and fashionable hypotheses of geological science. The published opinion of M. Agassiz² (Zool. 2395) certainly favours the idea that Enaliosaurians may still exist : he says it would be in precise conformity with analogy that an animal should exist in the American seas which has long been extinct and fossilized in the eastern hemisphere : he instances the gar-pike of the western rivers, and says that, in a recent visit to Lake Superior, he has detected several fishes belonging to genera now extinct in Europe.’

This is ‘ all werry capital ’ : but geological theories, however fashionable, are not, as a rule ‘ completely overturned ’ by a second-hand version of a casual story, told ‘ in company . . . as a matter of conversation.’ If the

¹ p. x., xi., *loc. cit.*

² J. L. R. Agassiz (1807-73), a celebrated Swiss naturalist who settled in the United States, where most of his best work was done. The remarks referred to appear on p. 2395 of the volume in much the same words as those used by Newman above.

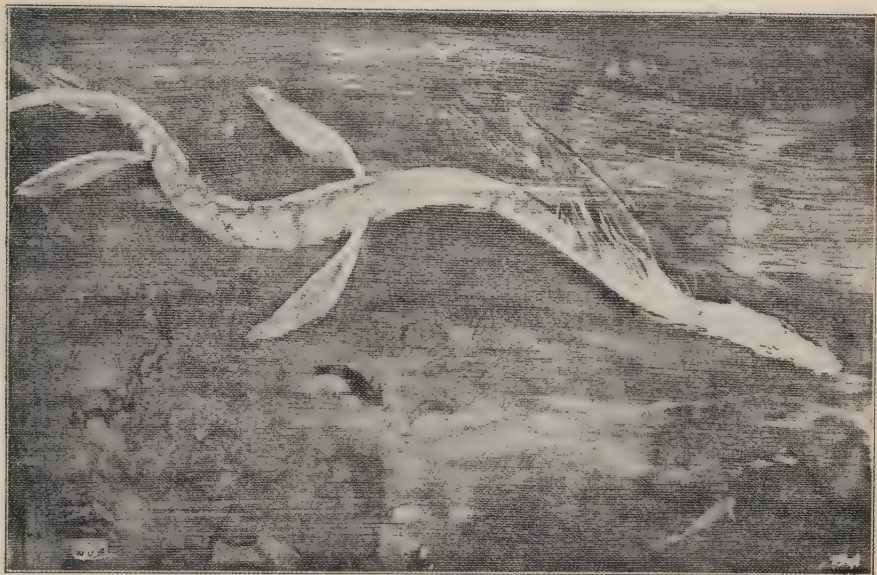


PLATE II. CREATURE SEEN BY H.M.S. 'FLY'

NOTE.—This is a modern (non-authoritative) drawing by Carton Moore Park, R.B.A.

From 'The Pall Mall Magazine,' October, 1901

[Facing p. 84



matter were so important, why (one wonders) did not Newman get into touch with Captain Hope and obtain a first-hand version of his experience (preferably in writing) : with, if possible, some confirmatory evidence ? As it stands, the most remarkable feature of the story is the absence of such elementary data as the time, place and date of the occurrence.

I have endeavoured to supply these, but without success. All that I have succeeded in discovering is that Hope, then a lieutenant,¹ served in H.M.S. *Fly* between 1836 and 1840, and that during this period the ship was frequently in the Gulf of California—which, be it noted, has an area of some 40,000 square miles. There is no mention of the matter in her log ; but this is what might be expected. The logs of the *Dædalus* and *Osborne*, for example, contain no reference to the monsters seen from them, although these formed the subjects of official reports to the Admiralty. In this case, it does not appear that the creature was seen by anyone except Hope, and it is unlikely that he reported the incident officially.

With all its defects, the story is too interesting to omit ; but it cannot be regarded as carrying very much weight.

Arisaig, N.S. (1844) : Merigomish, N.S. (1845).

Two other accounts of strange creatures seen in Nova Scotian² waters are to be found in Sir Charles Lyell's *Second Visit to the United States*.³ In his very entertaining

¹ He was appointed to the *Fly*, as first lieutenant, on September 2nd, 1836, being promoted to commander when she paid off in 1840.

² Should this book ever be honoured by translation into French or German, I trust that the translator will be warned by the curious blunder committed by Dr. Baly in his translation of Müller's *Elements of Physiology*, wherein he refers to the cannibals of Nova Scotia, instead of New Caledonia.

³ *A Second Visit to the United States of North America*, by Sir Charles Lyell, F.R.S. (London, Murray, 1850, pp. 132-4).

eighth chapter, he discusses various sea-serpent reports, which he relates with great fairness, admitting that 'when I left America in 1846 . . . I believed in the sea-serpent without having seen it.' On a later page, however, he repents his rashness, and advances the theory that the majority of the reported sea-serpents were actually basking-sharks.

Here, however, I am only concerned with two cases which he prints ; and which I transcribe because I have not found equally good accounts of them in any other authority.¹ It must be noted that they are at third-hand.

' . . . I received news of the re-appearance of the same serpent² in a letter from my friend Mr. J. W. Dawson, of Pictou, in Nova Scotia. This geologist, with whom I explored Nova Scotia in 1842, said he was collecting evidence for me of the appearance, in the month of August, 1845, at Merigomish, in the Gulf of St. Lawrence,³ of a marine monster, about 100 feet long, seen by two intelligent observers nearly aground in calm water, within 200 feet of the beach, where it remained in sight about half an hour, and then got off with difficulty.

' One of the witnesses went up a bank in order to look down upon it. They said it sometimes raised its head (which resembled that of a seal) partially out of the water. Along its back were a number of humps or protuberances, which, in the opinion of the observer on the beach, were true humps, while the other thought they were produced by vertical flexures of the body.

¹ Oudemans does not seem to have known of Lyell's accounts.

² This is a pure assumption.

³ This is a mistake on Lyell's part. Merigomish is not in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, but close to Pictou, on the northern side of Nova Scotia and at the eastern end of Northumberland Strait.

Between the head and the first protuberance there was a straight part of the back of considerable length, and this part was generally above water. The colour appeared black, and the skin had a rough appearance. 'The animal was seen to bend its body almost into a circle, and again to unbend it with rapidity. It was slender in proportion to its length. After it had disappeared in deep water, its wake was visible for some time. There were no indications of paddles seen. Some other persons who saw it, compared the creature to a long string of fishing-net buoys moving rapidly about.

'In the course of the summer, the fishermen on the eastern shore of Prince Edward's Island,¹ in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, had been terrified by this sea monster, and the year before, October, 1844, a similar creature swam slowly past the pier at Arisaig, near the east end of Nova Scotia, and, there being only a slight breeze at the time, was attentively observed by Mr. Barry, a millwright of Pictou, who told Mr. Dawson he was within 120 feet of it, and estimated its length at sixty feet, and the thickness of its body at three feet. It had humps on the back, which seemed too small and close together to be bends of the body.

'The body appeared also to move in *long undulations*, including many of the smaller humps. In consequence of this motion, the head and tail were sometimes both out of sight, and sometimes both above water, as represented in the annexed outline, given from memory.²

'The head . . . was rounded and obtuse in front, and

¹ The eastern end of Prince Edward Island lies roughly northward of Merigomish, and is separated from it by Northumberland Strait, about thirty miles across.

² See Fig. 6.

was never elevated more than a foot above the surface. The tail was pointed, appearing like half of a mackerel's tail. The colour of the part seen was black.

'It was suggested to Mr. Dawson that a swell in the sea might give the deceptive appearance of an undulating movement, as it is well known "that a stick held

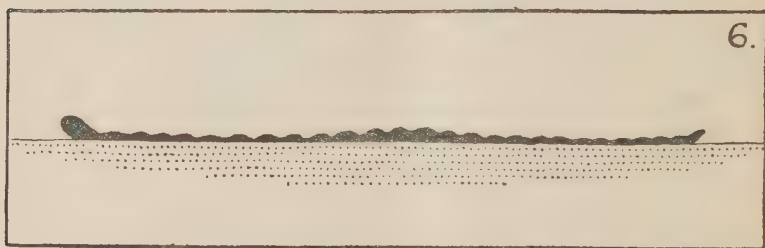


FIG. 6. SKETCH (from memory) OF THE CREATURE SEEN OFF ARISAIG, NOVA SCOTIA, IN OCTOBER, 1844

Re-drawn from Lyell's *Second Visit to the United States*.

horizontally at the surface of water when there is a ripple seems to have an uneven outline." But Mr. Barry replied that he observed the animal very attentively, having read accounts of the sea serpent, and feels confident that the undulations were not those of the water.'

Romsdal Fjord, Norway (1845).

Leaving these very interesting reports, I turn to one — of many — relating to appearances of the sea-serpent in Norwegian waters. It is quite a mistake to suppose that these ceased with the appearance of Pontoppidan's book. Like the New England reports, they form a continuous and lengthy series. As regards merely the first half of the nineteenth century, I have before me a list of *twenty-four* separate and well-attested appearances reported between 1800 and 1845 — and there have also been many since. I have selected one of the year 1845 which is tolerably full

in detail; prefacing it by an extract from a letter¹ addressed to the Secretary of the Admiralty (soon after the *Dædalus* case) by 'a gentleman long resident in Norway,' Mr. J. D. Morris Stirling.

' . . . my friend, the late Dr. Newmann, Bishop of Bergen . . . made it (the question of the "sea serpent's" existence) the subject of enquiry within the last twenty or twenty-five years among his clergy and those of the adjoining dioceses.' The amount of proof thus collected was sufficient to convince any one, however sceptical, as it is not mere hearsay evidence, but the testimony of known and respectable persons in various walks of life.'

It is, perhaps, one of the most pathetic features in connection with any unbiased enquiry into the subject of the sea-serpent, to find that over and over again some writer, looking at some particular portion of the enormous mass of evidence which has slowly accumulated and been shelved, is led confidently to assert that now, at last, the available proof is 'sufficient to convince any one, however sceptical.' Proof implies a capacity for the reception of proof; as one of our greatest astronomers, Horrox, once wrote, ' . . . it is much easier to teach the ignorant than those who will not learn.'²

'The size of the Sea-Serpents seen in the Norwegian Fjords varies much; and I do not now remember

¹ *Illustrated London News*, 28, x. 1848.

² Thus following strictly in the footsteps of his predecessor, Pontopidan, who was Bishop of Bergen from 1747 to 1764.

³ Quoted from his *Venus in sole visa*. He died at twenty-three; having crammed into his short life (1617-40) an amount of original work which conclusively proves that, had he lived, he would have had few equals, in any age, as a theoretical and practical astronomer.

what the dimensions of the largest are said to be. . . . There are, I believe, several varieties of the reptile known as the Sea-Serpent, but almost all the accounts agree as to the existence of a *mane*, and as to the great size of the eye. In several of the fossil reptiles somewhat approaching the Sea-Serpent in size and other characteristics, the orbit is very large¹ and in this respect, as well as in having short paws or flappers, the descriptions of the Northern Sea-Serpents agree with the supposed appearance of some of the antediluvian species. . . .

‘In concluding this hurried statement, allow me to add my own testimony as to the existence of a large fish or reptile of cylindrical form (I will not say Sea-Serpent). Three years ago, while becalmed in a yacht between Bergen and Sogn,² in Norway, I saw (at about a quarter of a mile astern) what appeared to be a large fish ruffling the otherwise smooth surface of the Fjord, and, on looking attentively, I observed what looked like the convolutions of a snake.

‘I immediately got my glass, and distinctly made out three convolutions, which drew themselves slowly through the water ; the greatest diameter was about ten or twelve inches. No head was visible, and from the size of each convolution I supposed the length to be about thirty feet. The master of my yacht (who, as navigator, seaman, and fisherman, had known the Norwegian coast and North Sea for many years), as well as a friend who was with me, an experienced Norwegian sportsman and porpoise shooter, saw the

¹ I imagine that the reference is to such creatures as the plesiosaurus and ichthyosaurus. The statement as to the orbit is not true of either – but the ichthyosaurus had a very large bony ring surrounding its eye.

² This is of no value as a clue to the yacht’s position. By sea, Bergen and Sogn are some ninety miles apart, and various routes might have been adopted.

same appearance at the same time, and formed the same opinion as to form and size. I mention the fact of my friend being a porpoise shooter, as many have believed that a shoal of porpoises following each other has given rise to the fable, as they called it, of the Sea-Serpent.'

This account, being anonymous, and relating to a somewhat indefinite appearance seen (although through a telescope) at a distance of a quarter of a mile or so, is of no great importance, except as relates to the perennial 'porpoise theory.' But its statement as to the collection of evidence at Bergen is valuable. Here is what I take to be a portion of that evidence, as it appeared in the *Zoologist*.¹ Molde is a small town on the northern side of Romsdal Fjord, in about 62° 50' N.

'The 28th of July, 1845, J. C. Lund, bookseller and printer; G. S. Krogh, merchant; Christian Flang, Lund's apprentice; and John Elgenses, labourer, were out on Romsdale-fjord, fishing. The sea was, after a warm, sunshiny day, quite calm.

'About seven o'clock in the afternoon,* a little distance from shore, near the ballast place and Molde Hooe, they saw a long marine animal, which slowly moved itself forward, as it appeared to them, with the help of two fins, on the fore-part of the body nearest the head,* which they judged from the boiling of the water on both sides of it.

'The visible part of the body appeared to be between

¹ 1847, p. 1606.

² Sunset was at about 8.55 p.m.

³ I do not take this to mean that the flappers were just behind the head, like a cherub's wings; but that they were on the fore end of the body – *i.e.* the part of the body nearest the head – and separated from the latter by the length of the neck.

forty and fifty feet in length, and moved in undulations like a snake. The body was round, and of a dark colour, and seemed to be several ells¹ . . . in thickness. As they discerned a waving motion in the water behind the animal, they concluded that part of the body was concealed under water. That it was one connected animal they saw plainly from its movement. When the animal was about one hundred yards from the boat, they noticed tolerably correctly its fore-part, which ended in a sharp snout ; its colossal head raised itself above the water in the form of a semi-circle ; the lower part was not visible. The colour of the head was dark brown and the skin smooth. They did not notice the eyes or any mane or bristles on the throat.

‘ When the serpent came about a musket-shot² near, Lund fired at it, and was certain the shots hit it in the head. After the shot he dived, but came up immediately. He raised his neck in the air like a snake preparing to dart on his prey. After he had turned and got his body in a straight line, which he appeared to do with great difficulty, he darted like an arrow against the boat. They reached the shore, and the animal perceiving it had come into shallow water, dived immediately, and disappeared in the deep.

‘ Such is the declaration of these four men, and no one has any cause to question their veracity, or imagine that they were so seized with fear that they could not observe what took place so near them. There are not many here, or on other parts of the Norwegian coast, who longer doubt the existence of the sea-serpent. The writer of this narrative was a long time sceptical, as he had not been so fortunate as to see this monster of the deep, but after the many accounts

¹ A Norwegian ell is practically two English feet.

² Say fifty yards.

he has read, and the relations he has received from credible witnesses, he does not dare longer to doubt the existence of the sea-serpent.

‘P. W. DEINBOLL.

‘Molde, the 29th Nov., 1845.’

As already remarked, many similar accounts to the foregoing could be quoted, all relating to appearances seen in Norwegian waters alone, and during the past century ; but the limitations of space forbid. In such matters, a sample – and the above is a fair sample – may, I think, be regarded as sufficient for the purpose of showing that there is good general agreement between the Norwegian accounts and the others from New England, Nova Scotia, and the North Atlantic.

CH. IV. H.M.S.

‘DÆDALUS,’ 1848.

ON October 4th, 1848, at 6.40 a.m., H.M. corvette *Dædalus*, 19 guns, arrived at Plymouth, homeward-bound from the East Indies to pay off.¹ With her came rumours of a strange sea-creature which she had encountered in the South Atlantic ; and in no long time these took the form of a paragraph which went the round of the evening papers, and thence found its way into *The Times*. Although – as will be seen – wildly exaggerated, it forms a useful introduction to a very remarkable narrative.

NAVAL INTELLIGENCE.*

Plymouth, Oct. 7.

‘When the *Daedalus* frigate, Captain M’Quhae, which arrived here on the 4th inst., was on her passage home from the East Indies, between the Cape of Good Hope and St. Helena, her captain, and most of her officers and crew, at 4 o’clock one afternoon saw a sea-serpent. The creature was twenty minutes in sight of the frigate, and passed under her quarter. Its head appeared to be about four feet out of the water, and there was about 60 feet of its body in a straight line on the surface. It is calculated that there must have been under water a length of 30 or 40 feet more, by which it propelled itself at the rate of 15 miles an hour. The diameter of the exposed part of the body was about 16 inches, and when it extended its jaws, which were

¹ She was commissioned for service on the East Indies Station in October 1844.

² *The Times*, 10, x. 1848.

full of large jagged teeth, they seemed sufficiently capacious to admit of a tall man standing upright between them. The ship was sailing north at the rate of eight miles an hour. The Daedalus left the Cape of Good Hope on the 30th of July, and reached St. Helena on the 16th of August.¹

On the principle that one can't correct a false impression too quickly, it may be pointed out that, in fact, the creature was not seen (close to) by 'most of her officers and crew,' but by seven persons only : that it was only visible (to the naked eye) for about five minutes, not twenty : and that no 'jagged teeth' were observed, for the simple reason that the creature was not seen to open its mouth. Apart from these points and one or two minor errors, the paragraph is tolerably correct.

If the matter had rested there, few could be blamed for thinking the report a newspaper hoax ; but it was not allowed to do so. On the same day (October 10th) an Admiralty minute directed the Commander-in-Chief, Plymouth, to call upon Captain M'Quhae for an official report as to the truth, or otherwise, of *The Times* paragraph.

It is almost platitudinous to say that there is no duty which our naval officers may not find themselves called upon to undertake, and no form of activity which they have not displayed. Their range is not even bounded by the seven seas. Before now they have dictated terms to the Pope, explored the interior of Africa, filled university chairs, and stood at the South Pole. From their ranks have come poets, painters, novelists, chess-players, prophets, world-famous scientists, kings, gods, and even Field-Mmarshals. Possibly heaving a sigh at the fuss

¹ The *Dædalus*' log confirms these dates.

which was being made over a comparatively small matter (which he had not considered worth an entry in the ship's log),¹ M'Quhae sat him down and drew up an excellent report, accompanied by a sketch.

Unfortunately, this report is no longer extant. Its fate was that of most things which have the misfortune to lie a little off the beaten track. At an uncertain date some Admiralty clerk, whom it would give me no pleasure to meet, 'weeded' it out of the Admiralty records as being of insufficient importance to be kept on file. In consequence it was pulped. All that there is to show for it in the Admiralty records² is a series of entries as under :

'Sea Serpent. Statement of one having been seen by the "Daedalus" having appeared in the Evening Papers ; Sir W. Gage to call upon Capt. McQuhae for report.

Minute, 10 Oct, 1848.

'Sir W. Gage states he has called upon Capt. McQuhae for report.

B 849 of 1848.

'Capt McQuhae sends description of this fabulous ? Animal (The Phoenix of the Deep).

B 850 of 1848.

'The Editor of the Zoologist requests a Copy of the Drawing.

¹ There is no question of the omission, but I am not certain of its motive. It may have been prudence – see the case of H.M.S. *Hilary*, p. 210. Or it may have been an attitude of mind analogous to that of another Scottish officer, a subaltern, who noted in his guard-report : 'Nothing extraordinary occurred since mounting guard.' It was subsequently found that during this period the sergeant of the guard had fallen from a 400-ft. cliff, and broken his neck. Questioned, the subaltern replied that he saw nothing extraordinary in such a result – but had the man survived uninjured, he would have reported this.

² In the appropriate 'Digest,' at 'cutting No. 90 A.'

'Acqd.¹ that the Copyright is in the hands of the Editor of the Illustrated London News.

Pro N 148 of 1848.

I cannot discover who was responsible for coining the delightful expression 'Phoenix of the Deep'—a most refreshing oasis in a desert of official verbiage.

Luckily the Admiralty communicated M'Quhae's report, forthwith, to *The Times*, and so rendered it generally accessible. I may remark that there can be no reasonable doubt that it was published verbatim. It was, as will be seen, publicly and severely criticised by Professor Owen; and M'Quhae, in replying to this attack, stated, equally publicly, that he adhered to its terms. We may, therefore, accept *The Times* version as practically equal in authority to the original report itself. The sketch (or one based on it) seems, also, to have been published, in the *Illustrated London News*.² Here is the full text of Captain M'Quhae's report.*

'Her Majesty's Ship Daedalus, Hamoaze, Oct. 11.

'Sir,—In reply to your letter of this day's date, requiring information as to the truth of a statement published in *The Times* newspaper, of a sea-serpent of extraordinary dimensions having been seen from Her Majesty's ship Daedalus, under my command, on her passage from the East Indies, I have the honour to acquaint you, for the information of my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, that at 5 o'clock p.m. on the 6th of August last, in latitude 24° 44' S., and longitude 9° 22' E., the weather dark and cloudy, wind fresh from the N.W., with a long ocean

¹ *I.e.* 'He has been acquainted.' ² On October 28th, 1848.

* From *The Times*, 14, x. 1848.

swell from the S.W., the ship on the port tack heading N.E. by N., something very unusual was seen by Mr. Sartoris, midshipman, rapidly approaching the ship from before the beam.¹ The circumstance was immediately reported by him to the officer of the watch, Lieut. Edgar Drummond,² with whom and Mr. William Barrett, the Master,³ I was at the time walking the quarter-deck. The ship's company were at supper.

'On our attention being called to the object it was discovered to be an enormous serpent, with head and shoulders kept about four feet constantly above the surface of the sea, and as nearly as we could approximate by comparing it with the length of what our maintop-sail yard would show in the water, there was at the very least 60 feet of the animal *à fleur d'eau*, no portion of which was, to our perception, used in propelling it through the water, either by vertical or horizontal undulation. It passed rapidly, but so close under our lee quarter, that had it been a man of my acquaintance I should have easily recognised his features with the naked eye; and it did not, either in approaching the ship or after it had passed our wake, deviate in the slightest degree from its course to the S.W., which it held on at the pace of from 12 to 15 miles per hour, apparently on some determined purpose.

'The diameter of the serpent was about 15 or 16 inches behind the head, which was, without any doubt, that of a snake, and it was never, during the 20 minutes that it continued in sight of our glasses, once below

¹ The beam is an imaginary line-of-reference, at right angles to a ship's keel.

² Lieutenant Edgar Atheling Drummond. He was promoted to lieutenant on August 28th, 1846, and appointed to the *Dædalus* on the 13th of the following November.

³ *I.e.* what would now be called the navigating officer.

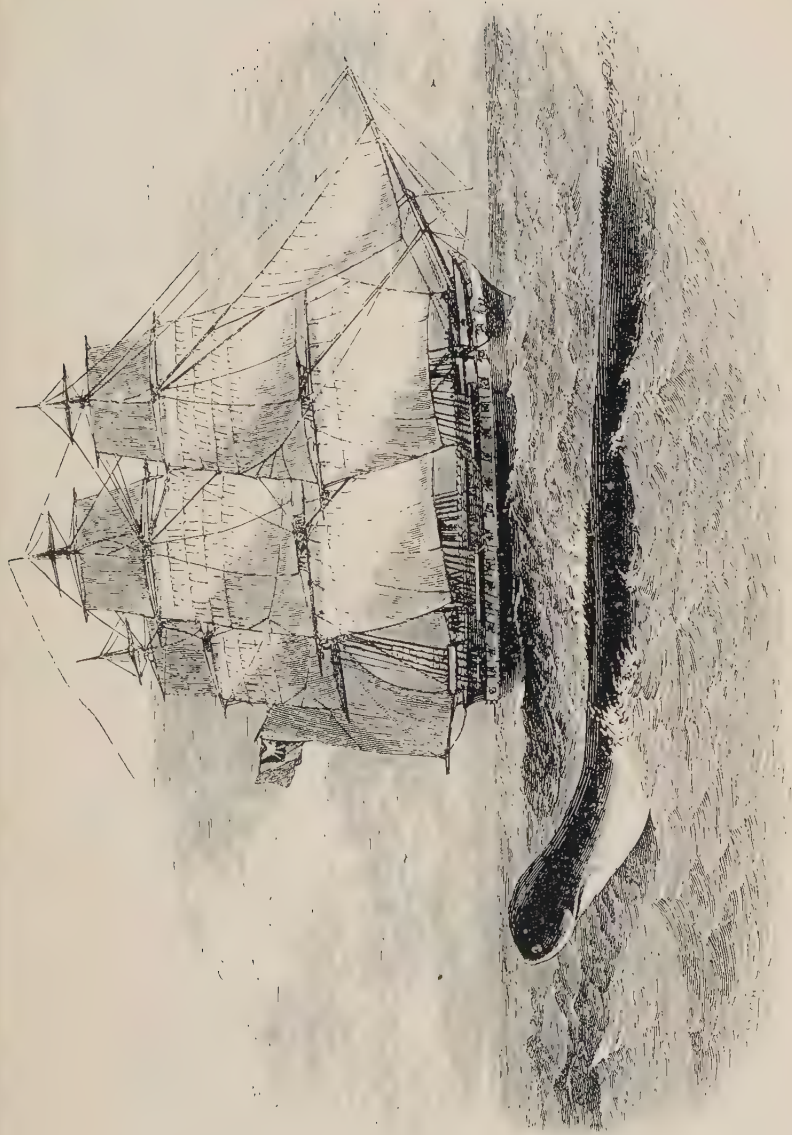


PLATE III.

THE 'DÆDALUS' SEA-SERPENT

From 'The Illustrated London News,' 28, X, 1848

[Facing p. 98



the surface of the water ; its colour a dark brown, with yellowish white about the throat. It had no fins, but something like a mane of a horse, or rather a bunch of seaweed, washed about its back. It was seen by the quartermaster, the boatswain's mate, and the man at the wheel, in addition to myself and officers above mentioned.

'I am having a drawing of the serpent made from a sketch taken immediately after it was seen, which I hope to have ready for transmission to my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty by to-morrow's post.

'I have, &c,

'PETER M'QUHAE, Captain.

'To Admiral Sir W. H. Gage, G.C.H.,¹ Devonport.'

This celebrated report is the *locus classicus* of the sea-serpent ; and in consequence it seems worth while to give here the results of comparing it with the ship's log — in which, as already noticed, there is no reference to the 'enormous serpent' seen on Sunday, August 6th. There are one or two minor discrepancies, but nothing of any note. The course steered from 4 to 5 p.m. is put down as N. by E., whereas M'Quhae states that the ship was 'heading N.E. by N.' — but as the wind between 2 and 7 p.m. is uniformly logged as 'variable' it is quite probable that M'Quhae's statement gives the correct course being steered at the time of the encounter. On the other hand, the log states '5 mustered at quarters' — a formality, occupying some ten minutes or so, during which all hands must have been on deck, not at supper. The day being Sunday, the men would have had the afternoon off except for working sails, etc., and I imagine

¹ Grand Commander of the Guelphic Order of Hanover. This décoration was a favourite one with William IV ; he gave it to several naval officers, including Sir John Franklin.

that they were piped to supper at or about 4 o'clock. In any event, it seems probable that the time of the encounter was actually about 4.40 or so, and not 5 p.m. as M'Quhae states. The log duly confirms the identity of the officer of the watch – the first dog-watch (4–6 p.m.) is initialled by Drummond. The weather during this watch is noted as 'CW.' – cloudy, with wet dew. The ship's position at the previous noon – lat. $24^{\circ} 57' S.$, long. $9^{\circ} 37' E.$, St. Helena distant 1015 miles, bearing N. $57^{\circ} 57' W.$ – agrees well with that given by M'Quhae for 5 p.m. Incidentally, it may be noted that this last is in some 2,000 fathoms of water, and 330 miles from the African coast.

Two pieces of confirmatory evidence are available. The *Zoologist* (which, as already noted, had failed to obtain the use of the official sketch) published the following extract¹ from Drummond's private journal :

' H.M.S. *Daedalus*, August 6, 1848, lat. $25^{\circ} S.$, long. $9^{\circ} 37' E.$ St. Helena 1015 miles.

' In the 4 to 6 watch, at about 5 o'clock, we observed a most remarkable fish on our lee quarter, crossing the stern in a S.W. direction ; the appearance of its head, which, with the back fin, was the only portion of the animal visible, was long, pointed, and flattened at the top, perhaps ten feet in length, the upper jaw projecting considerably : the fin was perhaps twenty feet in the rear of the head, and visible occasionally ; the captain also asserted that he saw the tail, or another fin, about the same distance behind it ; the upper part of the head and shoulders appeared of a dark brown colour, and beneath the under jaw a brownish white.

' It pursued a steady undeviating course, keeping its head horizontal with the surface of the water and in

¹ I. xii. 1848, p. 2306.

rather a raised position, disappearing occasionally beneath a wave for a very brief interval, and not apparently for purposes of respiration. It was going at the rate of perhaps from twelve to fourteen miles an hour, and when nearest was perhaps one hundred yards distant : in fact it gave one quite the idea of a large snake or eel.

' No one in the ship has ever seen anything similar, so it is at least extraordinary. It was visible to the naked eye for five minutes, and with a glass for perhaps fifteen more. The weather was dark and squally at the time, with some sea running.'

And here is another account, whose author I have not identified. It appeared ten years after the event (in *The Times*, February 16th, 1858).

' Sir,

Observing in your paper of yesterday's date a letter from a correspondent on the marine animal commonly called the " sea-serpent," in the concluding paragraph of which he mentions that he has no doubt the object seen from Her Majesty's Ship Daedalus in the month of August, 1848, when on the passage from the Cape of Good Hope to St. Helena, was a piece of the same seaweed observed by himself,¹ I beg to state that the object seen from Her Majesty's ship on that occasion was, beyond all question, a living animal, moving rapidly through the water against a cross sea, and within five points of a fresh breeze, with such velocity that the water was surging under its chest as it passed along at a rate, probably, of not less than 10 miles per hour.

' Captain M'Quhae's first impulse was to tack in

¹ See p. 136.

pursuit,¹ ourselves being on a wind on the larboard tack,² when he reflected that we neither could lay up for it nor overhaul it in speed.* There was nothing to be done, therefore, but to observe it as accurately as we could with our glasses as it came up under our lee quarter and passed away to windward, at its nearest position being not more than 200 yards from us ; the eye, the mouth, the nostril, the colour and form all being most distinctly visible to us.

' We all felt greatly astonished at what we saw, though there were sailors among us of 30 and 40 years standing, who had travelled most seas and seen many marvels in their day. The captain was the first to exclaim : " This must be that animal called the sea-serpent," a conclusion we all at last settled down to. My impression was that it was rather of a lizard than a serpentine character, as its movement was steady and uniform, as if propelled by fins, not by any undulatory power. It was in sight from our first observing it about 10 minutes, as we were fast leaving one another on opposite tacks with a freshening breeze and the sea getting up.

¹ A correspondent of the *Naval and Military Gazette* (18, xi. 48), signing himself ' S.,' suggested : ' Why did not Capt. M'Quhae clear a gun away, and give the stranger a shot ? If it had missed him, the report and splash would have made him alter his position, and perhaps display his form more distinctly.'

No doubt M'Quhae considered that, with the hands at supper and the ports secured, time was lacking for this. As will be seen later (p. 208), H.M.S. *Hilary* put this suggestion into practice some seventy years after. See also p. 165.

² *I.e.* the port tack.

* It is clear that, making eight knots to the creature's twelve or fifteen, she could not have overhauled it ; but it is not so clear that she could not have lain up for it. She was steering N.E. b. N. with a N.W. wind (*i.e.* lying seven points off the wind). Had she gone about, she could have steered S.W. b. W. ; or, without allowing for leeway, a point nearer the wind than the monster, if this were heading S.W.

' I feel, Sir, I have already occupied more of your time and space than is justifiable, and have the honour to remain your obedient servant

' AN OFFICER OF HER MAJESTY'S SHIP " DAEDALUS."
' Feb. 13.'

Finally, it should be mentioned that the *Illustrated London News*, which reprinted M'Quhae's report, and reproduced three sketches to accompany it,¹ also published, on November 4th, a letter from M'Quhae, in which he says :

' I have observed with very great satisfaction the Engravings of the " Sea-Serpent " in the ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS of the 28th. inst ; they most faithfully represent the appearance of the animal, as seen from Her Majesty's ship *Dædalus* on the 6th of August last ; and it is evident that much care has been bestowed on the subject by the artist employed, to whom I beg to acknowledge myself greatly indebted for the patience and attention with which he listened to the various alterations suggested by me during the progress of the drawings.'

Such is the first-hand evidence in the *Dædalus* case ; and it is hardly necessary to say that this became a nine-days-wonder, and something more. Public opinion was distracted between the unimpeachable character of the witnesses, and the strangeness of the story they had to tell. Never, before or since, has the world's attention been so sharply focused on the question of whether the sea-serpent is a hoax, a delusion, or a reality. One might imagine that anyone, coming to the evidence with an open mind, would agree that the last of these theories was

¹ Plates III and IV, and Fig. 7.

the only one justified by the evidence ; but, as a matter of fact, both the others found supporters : and the second, the assumption that the observers had been mistaken in what they saw, became the contemporary verdict – one still, in great measure, un-reversed.

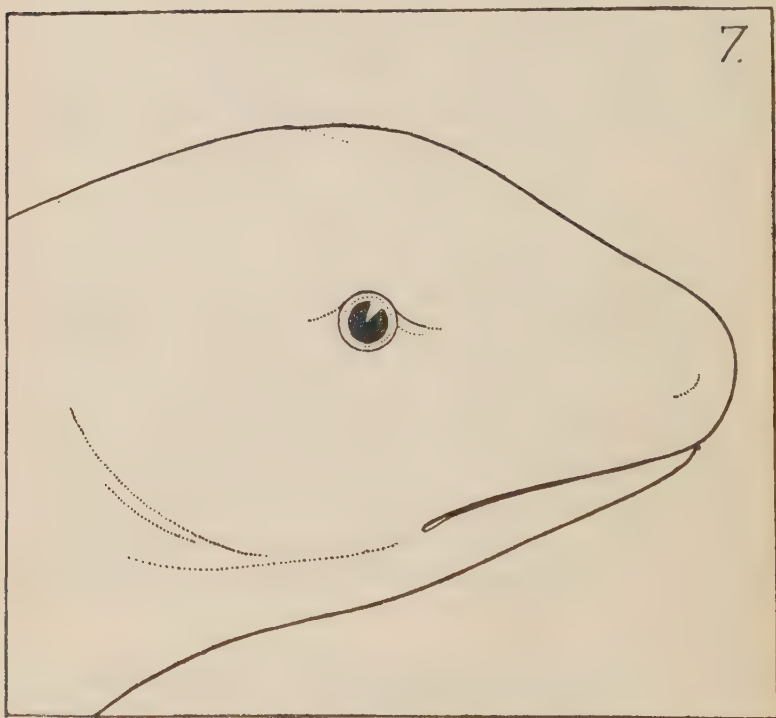


FIG. 7. HEAD OF THE 'DÆDALUS' SEA-SERPENT

Re-drawn (outline only), from the *Illustrated London News*, 28, x. 1848. The existence of the 'crescentic mark' indicating the nostril (see p. 112) is doubtful : in the original, it might equally be a piece of fancy shading.

I turn first to the opinions of those who imagined that the *Dædalus'* reports were in the nature of a hoax. This view, it is hardly necessary to say, was not put forward in her officers' hearing ; nor, indeed, did it find any very explicit enunciation in print. But there can be no doubt that an attempted hoax, closely connected with the

Dædalus case, was played by or upon a London newspaper a week after M'Quhae's report was published ; and the public can scarcely be blamed for supposing that both stories were horses from the same stable.

On October 21st the London *Globe* published a letter from one 'James Henderson, Master,' of the *Mary Ann*, dated from 'Broomielaw [Glasgow], Berth no. 4, Oct. 19.' It is not worth giving in full. Ostensibly, Captain Henderson, when clearing out of Lisbon on September 30th, had fallen in with the American brig *Daphne*, and had learned from her that on September 20th, in lat. $4^{\circ} 11' S.$, long. $10^{\circ} 15' E.$ she had encountered a huge sea-serpent with a dragon's head. Receiving, at forty yards range, a charge of spike-nails and scrap-iron from one of the deck-guns, it had made off at the rate of '15 or 16 knots an hour.'¹

The story – which one still finds, occasionally, accepted as genuine – appeared at an opportune moment. It was widely regarded by the simple-minded as confirming the *Dædalus*' report ; this, doubtless, was its author's intention. *The Times* republished Henderson's letter on October 23rd, and thereby evoked a sarcastic letter² from one 'H. W.' – apparently a member of Lloyd's. He pertinently remarks :

'... How the brig *Daphne*, with the wind north (or in any other direction) managed in 10 days to run from $4^{\circ} 11' S.$ to the latitude of Lisbon ($38^{\circ} 43' N.$) Captain Henderson does not state – probably the serpent took the brig in tow ...'

¹ One would like to be able to say that this phrase, in itself, showed its writer to be no seaman – but unfortunately, it is still often used by those who ought to know better. A knot is a measure of speed, not a distance. '15 knots per hour' is strictly equivalent to '15 nautical miles per hour per hour' – the correct phrase is '15 knots,' *tout court*.

² 26, x. 1848.

Not improbably, this letter stimulated *The Times* to make some enquiries as to the authenticity of the Henderson letter. At all events, on October 30th it published a short extract from the *North British Mail*, showing that the Henderson-Mary Ann-Daphne story was a fabrication. 'Upon inquiry we find that there has been no such ship, with the master's name as given, at the Broomielaw since the month of August.'

Most probably the story had its origin in the brain of some journalist of the Tom Garbage type, anxious to lie profitably while he could. Or it may be a sample of that perverted ingenuity which delights nowadays in jettisoning bogus messages from Nungesser, and other lost airmen : a proceeding which, on the most charitable supposition, has its origin in some obscure form of mental disease.

I am doubtful whether this hoax actually did very much towards discrediting M'Quhae's report. As already pointed out, the *Daphne* case was so inadequately exposed that it is still sometimes quoted as genuine. But at least it served to cast suspicion on the *Dædalus* story. In the letter just quoted, 'H. W.' attacked the latter also, remarking :

' . . . The spectacle of a homeward-bound ship in lat. 24° 44' S., and long. 9° 22' E. (between the Cape and St. Helena) with the wind N.W., steering N.E. by N., and on the port tack, far exceeds in novelty any serpent hitherto discovered.'

This was where, to quote Uncle Remus, he 'bruk his molasses jug.' He seems to have made the usual landsman's mistake, and confused the port and starboard tacks.¹

¹ A ship on the port tack has her bow pointing to the *starboard* side of the quarter from which the wind is blowing.

At least, if he did not, his criticism simply has no point at all ; in the position given St. Helena was about dead to windward, and from that point of view it was immaterial to M'Quhae whether he laid up for it on one tack or the other. This was pointed out, in a sensibly-written letter from one 'Zjetetes,' in *The Times* of October 30th ; while another of the fraternity, 'A Friend to Truth,' writing in the same columns two days later, remarked that those who knew M'Quhae would not for a moment doubt his statements, even if these had not been supported by other witnesses : a very proper assertion – which, however, was not likely to carry much weight when made anonymously.

Actually, in spite of the *Daphne* hoax, M'Quhae's honesty was not – and, obviously, could not be – seriously called in question. That a British post-captain, paying-off his ship and desirous of further employment, should deliberately go out of his way to embroil himself with the Board of Admiralty by playing off upon them a purposeless hoax (requiring, for even a short-lived success, the active co-operation of several of his officers, and the tacit complicity of his whole ship's company) was not merely improbable – it was frankly unthinkable. The alternatives were therefore reduced to two – either he and his officers had seen some creature unknown to mid-Victorian science, or they had failed to appreciate, or identify, what they had really observed. Needless to say, the latter was the view taken by the scientific world, following – perhaps unwittingly – in the footsteps of Sir Everard Home, who, writing (in 1809) of the 'Animal of Stronsa,'¹ unconsciously revealed his attitude of mind thus :

¹ *Philosophical Transactions*, 1809, pp. 206–20. See p. 245.

‘ It is of importance to science, that it should be ascertained, that this fish is not a new animal unlike any of the ordinary productions of nature. . . . ’

This view found a most able exponent in the famous Sir Richard Owen, then Curator of the Hunterian Museum, and already possessed of a European reputation as a naturalist and palæontologist. He developed it in a long and masterly letter which he originally addressed, as far as can be gathered, to some un-named nobleman who had asked for his views as to what the *Dædalus*’ monster really was. The letter, however, does not read as though it were intended to be confined to the family circle of any nobleman, however exalted his rank ; at any rate, it appeared a few days later in *The Times*,¹ with the following prefatory letter to the editor :

‘ Sir, – Subjoined is the answer to a question relative to the animal seen from the *Daedalus*, addressed to me by a nobleman distinguished in literature, and taking much interest in science.

‘ As it contains the substance of the explanation I have endeavoured to give to numerous inquirers, in the Hunterian Museum and elsewhere, and as I continue to receive many applications for my opinion of the “ Great Sea Serpent,” I am desirous to give it once for all through the medium of your columns, if space of such value may be allotted to it.

‘ I am, Sir, your very obedient servant

‘ RICHARD OWEN.

‘ Lincoln’s-inn-fields, Nov. 9.’

As might be anticipated, *The Times* found no difficulty in allotting the requisite space – nearly a column. But

¹ 14, xi. 1848. It was reprinted in the *Illustrated London News*, 25, xi. 1848.

Owen's letter was, and remains, something more than good current copy. It is a closely reasoned statement – almost an anti-creed – of the views held by those persons who, even *after examining the evidence*, disbelieve in the existence of any sea-serpent. If such are required to defend their position, here is an arsenal of polished weapons ready to their hand.

In view of its great importance, it becomes obviously necessary to reproduce Owen's letter, despite its length, in full. But fortunately it divides itself, quite naturally, into two fairly equal portions, the first relating to the *Dædalus* creature, and the second to the general question of whether any such creatures as the various reported sea-serpents actually exist – a question which Owen attempts to solve by proving a general negative. Consequently, in this chapter I reproduce only the former part of the letter, reserving the rest for quotation later.¹ It may be noted that, as originally sent to the 'nobleman,' the letter accompanied, and referred to, a sketch not reproduced in *The Times*. In its place was the following footnote :

'This [the sketch] was a reduced copy of the drawing of the head of the animal seen by Captain M'Quhae, attached to the submerged body of a large seal, showing the long eddy produced by the action of the terminal flippers.'²

I have not succeeded in tracing a copy of this sketch. Fig. 8 is intended to indicate its probable outlines.

¹ In Chapter XII.

² It may be noted that Owen was an excellent and resourceful draughtsman. He gave a proof of the latter quality in his drawing of the extinct diprodont. At the time when this was made, the complete skeleton was known, with the exception of the feet – so Owen drew the monster standing ankle-deep in undergrowth.

Here is the first half of Owen's letter.

'The sketch will suggest the reply to your query "whether the monster seen from the *Daedalus* be anything but a saurian?" If it be the true answer it destroys the romance of the incident, and will be anything but acceptable to those who prefer the excitement of the imagination to the satisfaction of the judgment.

'I am far from insensible to the pleasures of the discovery of a new and rare animal, but before I can



FIG. 8. OWEN'S SKETCH, AS IT MAY HAVE APPEARED

(*Not authoritative*)

enjoy them certain conditions, *e.g.* reasonable proof or evidence of its existence, must be fulfilled. I am also far from undervaluing the information which Captain M'Quhae has given us of what he saw. When fairly analysed, it lies in a small compass; but my knowledge of the animal kingdom compels me to draw other conclusions from the phenomena than those which the gallant captain seems to have jumped at.

'He evidently saw a large animal moving through the water, very different from anything he had before witnessed — neither a whale, a grampus, a great shark, an alligator,¹ nor any other of the larger surface-swimming

¹ An alligator 'surface-swimming' on the high seas would indeed be a phenomenon.

creatures which are fallen in with in ordinary voyages. He writes : " On our attention being called to the object, it was discovered to be an enormous serpent [read ' animal '], with the head and shoulders kept about four feet constantly above the surface of the sea. The diameter of the serpent [' animal '] was about 15 or 16 inches behind the head ; its colour a dark brown, with yellowish white about the throat." No fins were seen (the captain says there were none ; but from his own account he did not see enough of the animal to prove the negative). " Something like the mane of a horse, or rather a bunch of sea-weed washed about its back." So much of the body as was seen was " not used in propelling the animal through the water, either by vertical or horizontal undulation."¹ A calculation of its length was made under a strong preconception of the nature of the beast. The head, *e.g.*, is stated to be, " without any doubt, that of a snake " ; and yet a snake would be the last species to which a naturalist conversant with the forms and characters of the heads of animals would refer such a head as that of which Captain M'Quhae has transmitted a drawing to the Admiralty, and which he certifies to have been accurately copied in the *Illustrated London News* for October 28, 1848, p. 265.

' Your Lordship will observe that no sooner was the captain's attention called to the object than " it was discovered to be an enormous serpent," and yet the closest inspection of as much of the body as was visible, *à fleur d'eau*, failed to detect any undulations of the body, although such actions constitute the very character which would distinguish a serpent or serpentiform

¹ While preserving the sense, Owen's quotations, as will be seen by comparing them with the original (p. 98), are not verbally exact, and have been put together in a somewhat piecemeal fashion without any indication of this process.

swimmer from any other marine species.¹ The foregone conclusion, therefore, of the beast's being a sea-serpent, notwithstanding its capacious vaulted cranium, and stiff, inflexible trunk, must be kept in mind in estimating the value of the approximation made to the total length of the animal, as "at the very least 60 feet." This is the only part of the description, however, which seems to me to be so uncertain as to be inadmissible, in an attempt to arrive at a right conclusion as to the nature of the animal.²

'The more certain characters of the animal are these : — Head, with a convex, moderately capacious cranium, short obtuse muzzle, gape of the mouth not extending further than to beneath the eye, which is rather small, round, filling closely the palpebral aperture ; colour, dark brown above, yellowish white beneath ; surface smooth, without scales, scutes, or other conspicuous modifications of hard and naked cuticle. And the captain says, "Had it been a man of my acquaintance I should have easily recognized his features with my naked eye." Nostrils not mentioned, but indicated in the drawing by a crescentic mark at the end of the nose or muzzle.³

'All these are the characters of the head of a warm-blooded mammal ; none of them those of a cold-blooded reptile or fish. Body long, dark brown, not undulating, without dorsal or other apparent fins ; "but something like the mane of a horse, or rather a

¹ This is hypercriticism with a vengeance. We are not all naturalists ; and an ordinary man who saw only the serpentine head and neck of a creature would naturally say, whatever its motion, that it looked like a serpent.

² Or, to put it another way, 'This is the portion of the evidence which it is imperatively necessary for me to reject, as otherwise no amount of paring will make the facts fit my theory.'

³ See note below Fig. 7.

bunch of sea-weed washed about its back." The character of the integuments would be a most important one for the zoologist in the determination of the class to which the above defined creature belonged. If an opinion can be deduced as to the integuments from the above indication, it is that the species had hair, which, if it was too short and close to be distinguished on the head, was visible where it usually is the longest, on the middle line of the shoulders or advanced part of the back, where it was not stiff and upright like the rays of a fin, but "washed about." Guided by the above interpretation, of the "mane of a horse, or a bunch of sea-weed," the animal was not a cetaceous mammal, but rather a great seal.

'But what seal of large size, or indeed of any size, would be encountered in latitude $24^{\circ} 44'$ south, and longitude $9^{\circ} 22'$ east — viz., about three hundred miles from the western shore of the southern end of Africa? The most likely species to be there met with are the largest of the seal tribe, *e.g.* Anson's sea lion, or that known to the southern whalers by the name of the "Sea Elephant," the *phoca proboscidea*, which attains the length of from 20 to 30 feet. These great seals abound in certain of the islands of the southern and antarctic seas, from which an individual is occasionally floated off upon an iceberg. The sea lion exhibited in London last spring, which was a young individual of the *phoca proboscidea*, was actually captured in that predicament, having been carried by the currents that set northward towards the Cape, where its temporary resting place was rapidly melting away.

'When a . . . *phoca proboscidea* or *phoca leonina* is thus borne off to a distance from its native shore, it is compelled to return for rest to its floating abode after it has made its daily excursions in quest of the fishes or

squids that constitute its food. It is thus brought by the iceberg into the latitudes of the Cape, and perhaps further north, before the berg has melted away. Then the poor seal is compelled to swim as long as strength endures ; and in such a predicament I imagine the creature was that Mr. Sartoris saw rapidly approaching the *Daedalus* from before the beam, scanning, probably, its capabilities as a resting-place, as it paddled its long stiff body past the ship. In so doing, it would raise a head of the form and colour described and delineated by Captain M'Quhae, supported on a neck also of the diameter given ; the thick neck passing into an inflexible trunk, the longer and coarser hair on the upper part of which would give rise to the idea, especially if the species were the *phoca leonina*, explained by the similes above cited. The organs of locomotion would be out of sight. The pectoral fins being set on very low down, as in my sketch, the chief impelling force would be the action of the deeper immersed terminal fins and tail, which would create a long eddy, readily mistakeable by one looking at the strange phenomenon with a sea-serpent in his mind's eye for an indefinite prolongation of the body.

'It is very probable, that no one on board the *Daedalus* ever before beheld a gigantic seal freely swimming in the open ocean. Entering unexpectedly upon that vast and commonly blank desert of waters it would be a strange and exciting spectacle, and might well be interpreted as a marvel ; but the creative powers of the human mind appear to be really very limited, and, on all the occasions where the true source of the "great unknown" has been detected – whether it has proved to be a file of sportive porpoises, or a pair of gigantic sharks – old Pontoppidan's sea serpent with the mane has uniformly suggested itself as the representative

of the portent, until the mystery has been unravelled....'

Such is Owen's ingenious attempt to explain away the *Dædalus* story. He was obviously confident that he had succeeded — although we find him, a little further on, remarking :

' I have no unmeet confidence in the exactitude of my interpretation of the phenomena witnessed by the captain and others of the *Daedalus*. I am too sensible of the inadequacy of the characters which the opportunity of a rapidly passing animal, "in a long ocean swell," enabled them to note, for the determination of its species or genus. Giving due credence to the most probably accurate elements of their description, they do little more than guide the zoologist to the class, which, in the present instance, is not that of the serpent or the saurian.'

As already remarked, the second half of his letter is given in another chapter. But its rather curious ending may find a place here :

' In other words, I regard the negative evidence . . . as stronger . . . than the positive statements which have hitherto weighed with the public mind. . . . A larger body of evidence might be got together in proof of ghosts than of the sea-serpent.'

Before examining Owen's theory, it will be best to give M'Quhae's reply.¹ This was prompt and categorical.

¹ *The Times*, 21, xi. 1848. Also reprinted in the *Illustrated London News*, 25, xi. 1848.

‘ Sir, — Will you do me the very great favour to give a place in your widely circulating columns to the following reply to the animadversions of “ Professor Owen ” on the serpent or animal seen by me and others from Her Majesty’s ship *Daedalus* on the 6th of August last, and which were published in *The Times* of the 14th inst. ?

‘ I am, Sir, your obedient servant

‘ P. M’QUHAE.

‘ late Captain of Her Majesty’s ship *Daedalus*.
London, Nov. 18.’

‘ Professor Owen correctly states that I “ evidently saw a large creature moving rapidly through the water very different from anything I had before witnessed, neither a whale, a grampus, a great shark, an alligator, nor any of the larger surface-swimming creatures fallen in with in ordinary voyages.”¹ I now assert — neither was it a common seal nor a sea elephant, its great length and its totally differing physiognomy precluding the possibility of its being a “ *Phoca* ” of any species. The head was flat, and not a “ capacious vaulted cranium ” ; nor had it a “ stiff inflexible trunk ” — a conclusion to which Professor Owen has jumped, most certainly not justified by the simple statement, that “ no portion of the 60 feet seen by us was used in propelling it through the water, either by vertical or horizontal undulation.”

‘ It is also assumed that the “ calculation of its length was made under a strong preconception of the nature of the beast ” ; another conclusion quite contrary to the fact. It was not until after the great length was developed by its nearest approach to the ship, and until

¹ M’Quhae, also, does not quote his own letter verbatim, although he appears to do so. Nor does he always use Owen’s exact words, even when he puts them between inverted commas.

after that most important point had been duly considered and debated, as well as such could be in the brief space of time allowed for so doing, that it was pronounced to be a serpent by all who saw it, and who are too well accustomed to judge of lengths and breadths of objects in the sea to mistake a real substance and an actual living body, coolly and dispassionately contemplated, at so short a distance too, for the "eddy caused by the action of the deeper immersed fins and tail of a rapidly moving gigantic seal raising its head above the water," as Professor Owen imagines, in quest of its lost iceberg.

'The creative powers of the human mind may be very limited. On this occasion they were not called into requisition, my purpose and desire being, throughout, to furnish eminent naturalists, such as the learned Professor, with accurate facts, and not with exaggerated representations, nor with what could by any possibility proceed from optical delusion ; and I beg to assure him that old Pontoppidan having clothed his sea-serpent with a mane could not have suggested the idea of ornamenting the creature seen from the *Daedalus* with a similar appendage, for the simple reason that I had never seen his account, or even heard of his sea-serpent, until my arrival in London. Some other solution must therefore be found for the very remarkable coincidence between us in that particular in order to unravel the mystery.

'Finally, I deny the existence of excitement or the possibility of optical illusion. I adhere to the statements, as to form, colour, and dimensions, contained in my official report to the Admiralty ; and I leave them as data whereupon the learned and scientific may exercise the "pleasures of imagination" until some more fortunate opportunity shall occur of making

a closer acquaintance with the "great unknown" — in the present instance assuredly no ghost.'

I may be biased, but I confess to a strong impression that the honours of the controversy remained, and remain, with M'Quhae. As he pointed out, he had confined himself to recording the facts of the matter — the events and appearances which he had actually seen. Owen, not content with distorting some of these facts into conformity with his own theory — a totally unscientific proceeding — had gone out of his way to assert, *ex cathedra*, that the remaining facts were not, and could not be, such ; that they had originated in excitement, or credulity, or pre-conception, or in memories of Pontoppidan's stories — a series of imputations for which there was neither justification nor excuse.

It must be remembered that Owen, although a great man in many ways, with an almost superhuman capacity for investigation and an unrivalled power of exposition, yet gave, in the course of his long and brilliant career, sufficient proofs of possessing a singular and not entirely 'scientific' type of mind.

His attack upon the *Origin of Species* — particularly upon Darwin's theory of man's gradual evolution from lower forms¹ — is a case in point. Coming forward as the great scientific gun of the anti-Darwinians, he asserted, with all the weight of his then-unrivalled authority, that the brain of man possessed certain anatomical features — such as a convolution named the *hippocampus major* — for which no analogue could be found in the brain of any ape,

¹ In case a copy of this book ever finds its way to Tennessee, it may not be superfluous to point out, yet once more, that Darwin never suggested that Man evolved from a monkey ; but merely that both types had, not improbably, a common (remote) ancestor.

and which afforded ample ground for classifying and regarding the human species as a genus entirely apart from all other mammals. This view was at once controverted by Huxley ; who soon afterwards showed, by a series of dissections, that such structures are common both to man and to all the higher apes, and are not confined even to these.

Many other instances of Owen's peculiar mentality might be adduced¹—for example, his exploded theory that the human skull is a modified atlas vertebra—but none, I think, more completely illustrates his prejudiced attitude in the face of inconvenient truth. It is difficult to believe that he did not know the anatomical facts of the case ; it is still more difficult to believe that, if he knew them, he should have forsworn his allegiance to scientific truth for the sake of a temporary popularity among the orthodox. Still, other great men have done the same.

In comparison with his attitude on the subject of human origins, his views on the subject of the sea-serpent are a comparatively small matter ; and with regard to the latter no doubt many people, at the time, considered quite justifiably that he had satisfactorily explained away the 'creature' seen by the *Dædalus*, and resolved it into a sea-lion or sea-elephant. But not for long. Within a few years, it became apparent that Owen's hypothesis had quite failed to win any measure of acceptance among naturalists in general. A most able writer, R. A. Proctor, summed up the objections to it thus²:

¹ In a former book of mine—*Oddities* (1928)—is an account of his remarks upon the 'Devil's Hoofmarks' seen in Devonshire in 1855. In effect, he flatly denied that the witnesses—persons of standing and intelligence—could possibly have seen what they reported.

² In an essay entitled 'Strange Sea Creatures.' See his *Pleasant Ways in Science*, pp. 220, 221. Part of this essay appeared as an article in the *Echo*, 15, i. 1877.

'... few, I imagine, can readily accept the belief that Captain M'Quhae and his officers had mistaken a sea-elephant for a creature such as they describe and picture. To begin with, although it might be probable enough that no one on board the *Daedalus* had ever seen a gigantic seal freely swimming in the open ocean – a sight which Professor Owen himself had certainly never seen – yet we can hardly suppose they would not have known a sea-elephant under such circumstances. Even if they had never seen a sea-elephant at all, they would surely know what such an animal is like. No one could mistake a sea-elephant for any other living creature, even though his acquaintance with the animal were limited to museum specimens or pictures in books. The supposition that the entire animal, that is, its entire length, should be mistaken for 30 or 40 feet of the length of a serpentine neck, seems, in my judgment, as startling as the ingenious theory thrown out by some naturalists when they first heard of the giraffe – to the effect that some one of lively imagination had mistaken the entire body of a short-horned antelope for the neck of a much larger animal !'

One might imagine that if so celebrated a naturalist as Owen could find no more probable hypothesis than his sea-elephant to cover the reported facts, lesser fry would have been well advised to accept the existence of some unknown creature – or to remain silently sceptical.

Such, however, is by no means the case. Several other theories have been advanced ; but it is only necessary here to give two specimens – one possessing some merit, the other devoid of it.

In his *Sea Monsters Unmasked* (1883) Henry Lee

suggested his favourite explanation – the giant squid – as satisfying the descriptions given by Captain M'Quhae and his officers. He supported his views by a sketch (see Fig. 9). It is ingenious, but little more. A giant

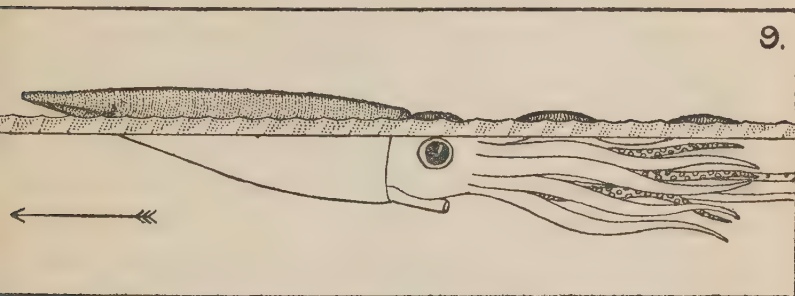


FIG. 9. LEE'S EXPLANATION OF THE 'DÆDALUS' SEA-SERPENT
Re-drawn from *Sea Monsters Unmasked*.

squid, swimming on the surface, would advance in a series of jerks as it expelled water from its impulse-tube ; and, when so advancing, its arms would be trailing astern of it. Contrast this with the steady, uniform motion, and the serpentine head and neck, of the *Dædalus*' creature.

It was reserved for the late F. T. Bullen¹ – a practical seaman and a vivid writer, but no naturalist – to outdo

¹ He had already advanced this explanation in the case of Egede's monster. See p. 20.

² Most authors, even the most eminent, commit an occasional blunder – for example, Coleridge speaks of a star visible between the crescent moon's horns ; Macaulay (who knew his *Faerie Queene* almost by heart) refers to the death of the Blatant Beast, whom Spenser left alive and kicking ; Scott makes one of Richard I's knights converse with a contemporary of William the Conqueror ; and Shakespeare's blunders in geography and chronology are notorious. Still, it is something of a shock to find Bullen, a deep-water sailor, writing a story in which the full moon rises at midnight – and that not in a casual reference, but constituting the whole point of the tale. This is almost equal to the famous moon of Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* (early editions), which was full one night, new next day (when a solar eclipse, lasting *over an hour*, took place) and full again two nights later !

Owen both in the improbability of his explanation and the contempt which he exhibited towards M'Quhae and the other witnesses. In a popular book called *Creatures of the Sea* he devoted a chapter to a rather scathing review of Oudemans' *Great Sea-Serpent* – a task for which he was quite unqualified – and decided, *inter alia*, that the *Dædalus*' monster was probably a rorqual, or 'sulphur-bottom' whale ! Feeling that his readers might possibly consider there were one or two points of difference between a creature with a long serpentine neck fifteen inches in diameter and a whale with an enormously broad head merging and broadening into a body some fifteen feet across – and that, at a distance of about a hundred yards, these differences were not unlikely to have been remarked – he casually added that he had never met a sailor who could tell one kind of whale from another, or describe it correctly ! I have always wondered why he didn't suggest, while he was about it, that Captain M'Quhae had 'spliced the main-brace' shortly before the sea-serpent was sighted.

In fairness, however, it should be pointed out that there is a discrepancy in the *Dædalus* evidence which, although capable of explanation, does afford, at first sight, some support to the theories advanced by Owen and even by Bullen. The drawings accompanying M'Quhae's report in the *Illustrated London News* differ considerably from the text of that report. M'Quhae described the creature as being about sixty feet in visible length, with a neck about fifteen inches in diameter behind the head, this being held about four feet above the water. Now, if one compares this description with Plates III and IV, it becomes obvious that both of them give a most misleading impression of the animal's girth – or, at least, of the visible portion's girth – in proportion to its length. In

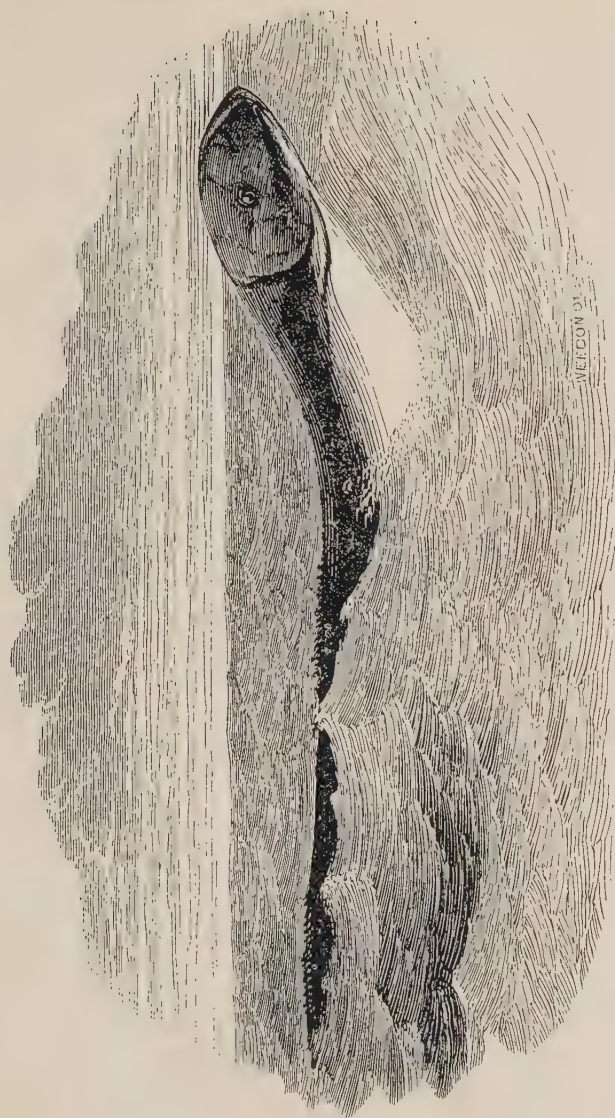


PLATE IV.

ANOTHER DRAWING OF THE 'DÆDALUS' SEA-SERPENT

From 'The Illustrated London News,' 28, x, 1848

[Facing p. 122

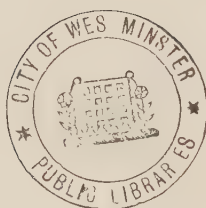


Plate III, if we assume the neck behind the head to be sixteen inches diameter, the top of the head will be about four feet above water, as stated by M'Quhae. But in such case the total length shown is only about eighteen feet – not sixty. Similarly, Plate IV only shows about eleven feet of the creature's length. This abbreviation was probably due to the need for making the scale of the drawings large enough to show detail, and yet keeping their extent within reasonable limits. Plate III, as it appeared in the *Illustrated London News*, occupied the full width of a page; the actual length of the creature's body, as shown, being just over seven inches. Had the whole extent – sixty feet – of the body been shown on the same scale, the drawing would have had to be folded : it could not have been got in even as a ' double-page feature.'

The provenance of the drawings is not very clear. M'Quhae, it will be remembered, speaks in his report of having *a* drawing made, which he would transmit to the Admiralty shortly. But *three* drawings were actually published in the *Illustrated London News*, and M'Quhae speaks of them as drawn, under his supervision, by ' the artist employed ' – presumably, by the paper. It would appear from this that none of the three was that which originally went to the Admiralty. On the other hand, the Admiralty minute speaks of the copyright of this drawing as now ' in the hands of the Editor of the *Illustrated London News*.' It seems most likely that it was used as the basis, at least, of Plate IV.¹ Incidentally, I am inclined to believe, although there is no direct evidence, that this

¹ This shows the creature as it might have been seen from the ship, whereas the viewpoint of Plate III is that of an imaginary observer in another vessel. It is true that both are wood-engravings, and that if Plate III had been drawn direct on the block (as was often done) it would have been reversed when printed – but in that case the *Dædalus*, in the background, would have been shown on the wrong tack.

drawing was made by Sartoris.¹ But, in any case, it must be remembered that the drawings, as evidence, have less value than the statements. Anyone whose mind's eye is in reasonable working order, and who is not absolutely tongue-tied, can be trusted to give or write down (soon after the event) a reasonably accurate account of some unusual appearance which he has witnessed. But to make an accurate *drawing*, from memory, is another matter altogether, a task beyond the powers of all except a few great artists.² In such circumstances the drawing – I speak from my own slight experience – tends, as it takes shape on the paper, to distort and confuse the memory. The parts first drawn have a very definite influence on the remainder – the need of making the work look complete induces guesswork as to points not clearly noted at the time – and the final product, which must of necessity have been prominently before the eye while it was in the making, submerges and supersedes the original mental image.

Such being the case, it is obvious that not much reliance could be placed even on the original sketch made by an eye-witness (who was, presumably, not a trained artist) and 'worked up' two months after the event. Still less can one regard as trustworthy a version of that sketch re-drawn by another hand, even under M'Quhae's supervision. A drawing done jointly by two artists would have a rather singular appearance – what is to be said of one in which the original guess-work of an unskilled

¹ Gosse, in his *Romance of Natural History* (p. 349), assumed that all three *Illustrated London News* drawings were made by Sartoris. I can find no authority for this, and it is contradicted by M'Quhae's letter to the paper.

² William Blake's power of visual memory was most exceptional; yet even he sometimes found it impossible to produce a recognisable likeness, from memory, of someone well known to him.

draughtsman is revised and amplified by a professional anxious to produce a striking drawing, and subject only to the corrective of further suggestions and guess-work supplied by a third party?

Bearing in mind the untrustworthy nature of the evidence afforded by the drawings, the flimsy basis of Owen's theory becomes apparent. The characteristics – 'convex, moderately capacious cranium,' 'short obtuse muzzle,' 'nostrils indicated . . . by a crescentic mark,' and the rest – which he relies on as proving the creature to be a 'warm-blooded mammal,' and hence probably a sea-elephant, are to be found in the drawings, and in them only – there is no mention of such points in the reports. Admittedly, it was unfortunate that M'Quhae should have warmly commended drawings which differed so widely from his written statement: still, as already explained, it was not altogether unnatural – particularly if (as is quite possible) he did not compare the two before publication. If he took an active share in the making of the drawings, it is quite on the cards that he gradually came to believe that, when finished, they 'most faithfully' represented the appearance of his sea-serpent.¹

Similarly, Bullen endeavoured to support his suggestion that the creature was a rorqual whale by two sketches, one being a version of Plate III, and the other showing a rorqual in much the same general position. Even as they stand, the resemblance is very small, but if Plate III had not shown the creature as about one-third of its correct length, in proportion to the diameter of its neck, it would at once have been seen that the theory was preposterous.

¹ Here, and elsewhere, I refer to Plates III and IV. Fig. 7 is, I am convinced, enlarged from these by the *I.L.N.* artist, and has no value as original evidence.

Fig. 10 shows an attempted re-drawing of Plate IV corrected for scale from M'Quhae's report. I have subjoined a suggestion of what the under-water portions of the creature looked like.

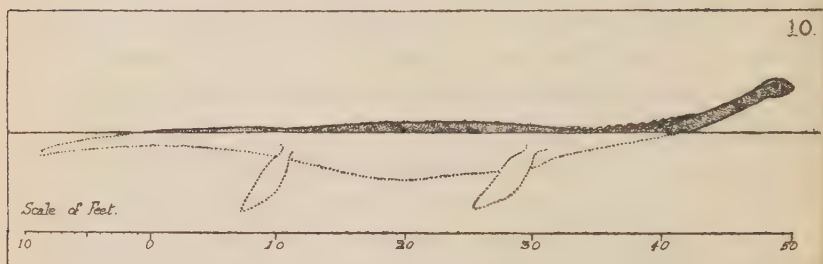


FIG. 10. THE 'DÆDALUS' SEA-SERPENT
Drawn to scale from Capt. M'Quhae's report.

Here I must leave the still-famous *Dædalus* case. I submit that the evidence is good and clear, that the probity of the witnesses is unquestionable, and that their narratives are inexplicable except on one assumption ; namely, that they saw a living creature of unknown species.

CH. V. FURTHER MISCELLANEOUS REPORTS : 1848-1872

IN this chapter I have brought together, in chronological order, four reports which, while not comparable in importance with that of H.M.S. *Dædalus*, are still of considerable interest. They relate to the creatures seen from H.M.S. *Plumper* in 1848 (soon after the *Dædalus* case), from the ship *Imogen* in 1856, from the *Castilian* in 1858, and from the cutter *Leda* in 1872.

H.M.S. '*Plumper*,' 1848.

In its issue of April 14th, 1849, the *Illustrated London News* published the following letter, accompanied by a sketch (Fig. 11) :

' H.M.S. *Plumper*, Portsmouth Harbour,

' April 10, 1849.

' Not having seen a sketch of the extraordinary creature we passed between England and Lisbon, and being requested by several gentlemen to send you the rough one I made at the time, I shall feel much obliged by your giving it publicity in your instructive and amusing columns.¹

' On the morning of the 31st December, 1848, in lat. $41^{\circ} 13'$ N. and long. $12^{\circ} 31'$ W., being nearly due west of Oporto, I saw a long black creature with a sharp head, moving slowly, I should think about two knots, through the water, in the north westerly direction, there being a fresh breeze at the time, and some sea on. I could not ascertain its exact length, but its back was about twenty feet if not more above water ; and its

¹ Misprinted 'olumns.'

head, as near as I could judge, from six to eight. I had not time to make a closer observation, as the ship was going six knots through the water, her head E. half S., and wind S.S.E.

‘The creature moved across our wake towards a merchant barque on our lee-quarter,¹ and on the port tack. I was in hopes she would have seen it also. The officers and men who saw it, and who have served in parts of the world adjacent to whale and seal fisheries, and have seen them in the water, declare they have neither seen nor heard of any creature bearing the slightest resemblance to the one we saw.

‘There was something on its back that appeared like a mane, and, as it moved through the water, kept washing about; but before I could examine it more closely, it was too far astern.

‘I remain, yours very truly,

‘A NAVAL OFFICER.’

[We have engraved our correspondent’s sketch,² which coincides with one forwarded to the Lords of the Admiralty previous to the return of H.M.S. *Plumper*.—Ed.]

Being unsigned, this story does not carry very much weight – on the other hand, it is not likely to have been a hoax. It appeared before the public interest and excitement over the *Dædalus* case had been forgotten, and if a hoax had been perpetrated in the name of another of H.M. ships it is most improbable that it would have escaped detection for more than a very short time.

I have examined the *Plumper*’s log. Like that of the *Dædalus*, it contains no reference to the incident. This

¹ *I.e.* bearing about N.W. from the *Plumper*.

² See Fig. 11. I have not succeeded in finding the Admiralty copy of this sketch – it has probably been ‘weeded.’

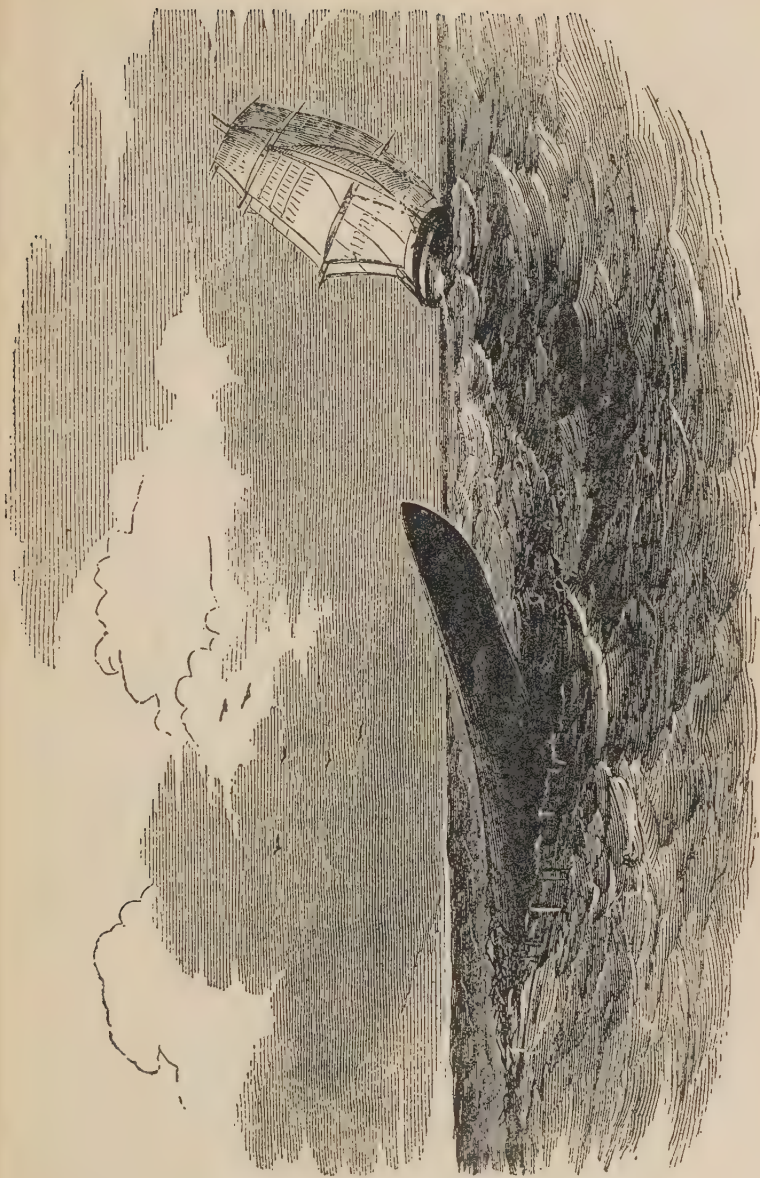


FIG. II. H.M.S. 'PLUMPER'S' SEA-SERPENT
From the *Illustrated London News*, 14, iv. 1849

presumably occurred between 9 a.m. and noon. The noon portion is given as $40^{\circ} 55' N.$, $12^{\circ} 34' W.$ (by observation). The position given in the letter (probably jotted down approximately from memory, and not verified by the log) does not agree well with the ship's run between daylight and noon, and therefore does not enable the time of the encounter to be determined : but at 9 a.m. the log records 'One sail in sight N.W.'—presumably the 'merchant barque' referred to. The weather is logged as cloudy, and the wind strong (it blew up into a gale the same afternoon¹). The officers of the morning and forenoon watches—one of whom, probably, wrote the letter—were respectively Lieutenant Trevenen P. Coode, R.N., and Mr. Robert B. Batt, Acting-Master, R.N.

The sketch is reminiscent of the *Illustrated London News*' *Dædalus* drawings, which had appeared before the *Plumper* left England ; it is quite possible that it is entirely independent of them, but one cannot assume this. I imagine that the phrase '. . . its back was about twenty feet if not more above water' does not mean exactly what it says, for if the back, in the sketch, were twenty feet out of water the head would be about a hundred. I read it as equivalent to '. . . about twenty feet or more of its back were above water, and, as near as I could judge, from six to eight of its head' ('and neck,' presumably).

'*Imogen*,' 1856.

Ever since the *Dædalus* case, the *Illustrated London News* has shown a praiseworthy readiness to give space to

¹ It is then logged as force 9 (10 being a hurricane). The log is full of entries relating to reefs taken in, tackle and spars carried away, and Government stores lost overboard. It must have been an unpleasant (Sunday) afternoon, and a cheerless ending to the year.

similar reports. Between 1848 and 1877 (the date of the *Osborne* case) for example, it published ten such, including that of the *Plumper*, already given, and the following:¹

‘*Imogen*, Channel, 15th April, 1856.

‘Sir, — We beg to hand you the inclosed sketch² of a Sea-Serpent we had the good fortune to sight on the 30th March last.

‘*Imogen*, from Algoa Bay, towards London. Sunday 30th March, 1856. Lat. 29 deg. 11 min. N.; Long., 34 deg. 36 min. W.; bar. 30.50; calm and clear. Four vessels visible to southward and westward.

‘About five minutes past eleven, a.m., the helmsman drew our attention to something moving through the water, and causing a strong ripple about 400 yards distant from our starboard quarter.

‘In a few moments it became more distinct, presenting the appearance represented in Fig. 1,³ and showing an apparent length of about forty feet (above the surface of the sea), the undulations of the water extending on each side to a considerable distance in its wake. Mr. Statham immediately ascended to the maintopsail-yard, Captain Guy and Mr. Harries watching the animal from the deck with the telescope.

‘After passing the ship about half-a-mile, the serpent “rounded to” and raised its head, seemingly to look at us (Fig. 2), and then steered away to the northward (N.E.), possibly to the neighbourhood of the Western Islands, ‘frequently lifting its head (Fig. 3). We traced its course until nearly on the horizon, from the topsail-yard, and lost sight of it from deck about 11 h. 45 m. a.m.

‘No doubt remained on our minds as to its being an immense snake, as the undulations of its body were

¹ *Illustrated London News*, 3, v. 1856.

² See Fig. 12.

³ These reference numbers will be found in Fig. 12.

⁴ The Azores, distant about 600 miles north-eastward.

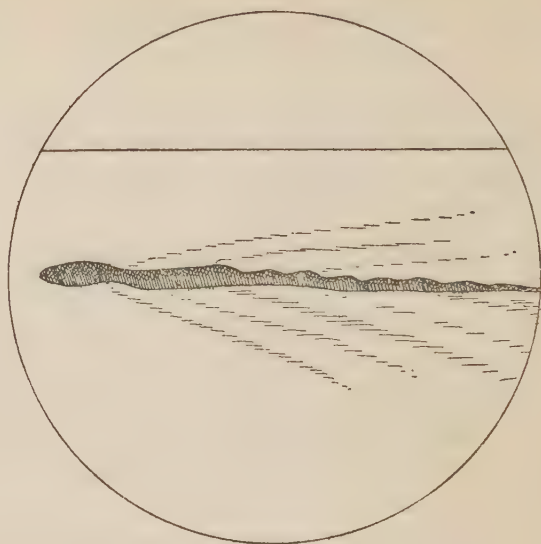


FIG. 12. THE 'IMOGEN'S' SEA-SERPENT

Re-drawn from the *Illustrated London News*, 3, v. 1856

NOTE.—The sketch in the circle is intended to show the same aspect of the creature as the sketch numbered 1, but seen through a telescope.

clearly perceptible, although we were unable to distinguish its eyes.¹ The weather being fine and the glassy surface of the sea only occasionally disturbed by slight flaws (catspaws) of wind we had a perfect opportunity of noticing its movements.

'In conformity to your regulations we inclose our references, and remain,

'Sir, your obedient servants,

'JAMES GUY, Commander.

'J. H. STATHAM,

'JULIAN B. HARRIES,

'D. J. WILLIAMSON, Passengers.'

Although having no great pretensions to artistic merit, the figures are clear, and supplement the account admirably. No. 2, showing the creature 'rounding to,' combines, to my mind, the idea of vertical undulation with horizontal curvature as well as this could be done in a few lines.

'*Castilian*,' 1857.

The following letter appeared in *The Times*, February 4th, 1858.

Sir, -

'I beg to enclose you a copy of an extract from the meteorological journal kept by me on board the ship *Castilian* on a voyage from Bombay to Liverpool. I have sent the original to the Board of Trade, for whom the observations have been made during my last voyage. I am glad to confirm a statement made by the commander of Her Majesty's ship *Daedalus* some years ago as to the existence of such an animal as that described by him. I remain, Sir, your obedient servant

'G. H. HARRINGTON,

'14 and 14 $\frac{1}{2}$, South Castle-Street, Liverpool,' Feb. 2.

¹ I cannot quite follow this reasoning, and suspect a *non-sequitur*.

It may be noted here that, at this date, the Meteorological Department of the Board of Trade (now merged into the Meteorological Office) had not long been founded,¹ and that, for the purpose of accumulating data, it had offered to supply meteorological instruments to any captain of a British merchant-vessel who would undertake to record his observations in a log (also supplied) and return this to the Department at the end of the voyage. The appearance of a strange sea-creature is not, strictly speaking, a meteorological phenomenon ; I imagine that Captain Harrington welcomed the chance of making an official record of the event elsewhere than in the ship's log – a proceeding which might, possibly, involve him in trouble with his owners. Here is his account.

‘ Copy of an Extract from the Board of Trade Meteorological Journal kept by Captain Harrington, of the ship *Castilian*, from Bombay for Liverpool.

‘ Ship *Castilian*, Dec. 12, 1857, north-east end of St. Helena, bearing north-west, distance 10 miles.

‘ At 6 30 p.m., strong breezes and cloudy, ship sailing about 12 miles per hour. While myself and officers were standing on the lee side of the poop, looking towards the island, we were startled by the sight of a huge marine animal which reared its head out of the water within 20 yards of the ship, when it suddenly disappeared for about half a minute, and then made its appearance in the same manner again, showing us distinctly its neck and head about 10 or 12 feet out of the water.

‘ Its head was shaped like a long nun buoy,² and I suppose the diameter to have been seven or eight feet in the largest part, with a kind of scroll, or tuft of

¹ It was started in 1854, under Admiral FitzRoy.

² A buoy formed of two cones, united at their bases.

loose skin, encircling it about two feet from the top ; the water was discoloured for several hundred feet from its head, so much so that on its first appearance, my impression was that the ship was in broken water, produced, as I supposed, by some volcanic agency since the last time I passed the island, but the second appearance completely dispelled those fears, and assured us that it was a monster of extraordinary length, which appeared to be moving slowly towards the land.

‘ The ship was going too fast to enable us to reach the mast-head in time to form a correct estimate of its extreme length, but from what we saw from the deck we conclude that it must have been over 200 feet long. The boatswain and several of the crew who observed it from the topgallant forecastle¹ state that it was more than double the length of the ship, in which case it must have been 500 feet ; be that as it may, I am convinced that it belonged to the serpent tribe ; it was of a dark colour about the head, and was covered with several white spots. Having a press of canvass on the ship at the time, I was unable to round to without risk, and therefore was precluded from getting another sight of this leviathan of the deep.

‘ GEORGE HENRY HARRINGTON, Commander.

‘ WILLIAM DAVIES, Chief Officer.

‘ EDWARD WHEELER, Second Officer.’

Captain Harrington’s letter elicited an immediate and somewhat peculiar reply – in the shape of an attack directed impartially upon himself and Captain M’Quhae. In *The Times* of 12, ii. 1858, there appeared a letter from a brother merchant-skipper, Captain Frederic Smith.

¹ *I.e.* a forecastle rising, like a poop, above the level of the ship’s middle portion.

' In your paper of the 5th¹ inst. is a letter from Captain Harrington, of the ship Castilian, stating his belief that he had seen the great sea serpent near St. Helena. His confidence is strengthened from the fact of something similar having been seen by Her Majesty's ship Daedalus near the same position. The following circumstance, which occurred on board the ship Pekin, then belonging to Messrs. T. & W. Smith, on her passage from Moulmein, may be of some service respecting this "queer fish."

' On December the 28th, 1848, being then in lat. 26 S., long. 6 E., nearly calm, ship having only steerage way, saw about half-a-mile on port beam a very extraordinary-looking thing in the water of considerable length. With the telescope we could plainly discern a huge head and neck, covered with a long shaggy-looking kind of mane, which it kept lifting at intervals out of the water. This was seen by all hands and declared to be the great sea-serpent.

' I determined on knowing something about it, and accordingly lowered a boat, in which my chief officer and four men went, taking with them a long small line in case it should be required.² I watched them very anxiously, and the monster seemed not to regard their approach. At length they got close to the head. They seemed to hesitate, and then busy (*sic*) themselves with the line, the monster all the time ducking its head, and showing its great length. Presently the boat began pulling towards the ship, the monster following slowly.

¹ This should have been 'the 4th.'

² One would have thought that if Captain Smith really believed he was sending a boat's crew, like Jonah, into the jaws of a formidable sea-monster, he would have done better to equip them with offensive weapons. '*Canst thou draw out leviathan with an hook ? or his tongue with a cord which thou lettest down ?*'

'In about half-an-hour they got alongside ; a tackle was got on the mainyard, and it¹ was hoisted on board. It appeared somewhat supple when hanging, but so completely covered with snaky-looking barnacles about eighteen inches long,² that we had it some time on board before it was discovered to be a piece of gigantic seaweed, 20 feet long, and 4 inches diameter ; the root end of which appeared when in the water like the head of the animal, and the motion given by the sea caused it to seem alive. In a few days it dried up to a hollow tube, and as it had a rather offensive smell was thrown overboard.

'I had only been a short time in England when the *Daedalus* arrived and reported having seen the great sea-serpent – to the best of my recollection near the same locality, and which I have no doubt was a piece of the same weed. So like a huge living monster did this appear, that had circumstances prevented my sending a boat to it I should certainly have believed I had seen the great sea snake.'

Captain Smith's recollection was not very good. The *Dædalus* had arrived in England, and 'reported having seen the great sea-serpent,' on October 4th – nearly three months before he hoisted in his piece of seaweed. His encounter with this, however, was confirmed by an earlier report of a very similar occurrence. A now-extinct London daily, the *Sun*, published on July 9th, 1849, a story very closely resembling Captain Smith's.³ By this account, Captain Herriman, of the ship *Brazilian*, found his vessel becalmed, on February 24th, 1849, in about

¹ The 'monster' – not the main yard, or the tackle.

² Probably *Lepas antifer*.

³ Republished in the *Zoologist*, 1849, pp. 2541, 2542.

26° S, 8° E.¹ ; and perceived, about 8 a.m., an object about half a mile to the westward, some thirty feet long and moving with a 'sinuous motion.' He armed himself with a harpoon; and, manning a boat, proceeded to investigate it. He discovered it to be an enormous piece of seaweed, evidently detached from a coral reef – the root, which had appeared to be the head of an animal, still having pieces of coral adhering to it. He hoisted it in, but it decayed, and had to be jettisoned.

The accounts given by Smith and Herriman are so singularly alike that one might be pardoned for thinking that one was copied from the other. That two captains of merchant vessels should both be becalmed at about the same spot, in the same season (southern summer, 1848–9); that both should sight, on each occasion about half a mile away, something which both took to be a sea-creature; that both should send a boat to it; that both should discover it to be a piece of seaweed; that both should hoist it on board; and, finally, that both should jettison it before reaching England – is, certainly, a very remarkable string of coincidences. But I do not suggest that it is more: nor do I think that there was any real animus behind Smith's letter – although, in view of the saying 'two of a trade can never agree,'² he may not exactly have been averse from putting a spoke in a colleague's wheel.

It is quite likely that Herriman and Smith honestly

¹ The *Sun*'s account, written no doubt with an eye to effect, stated that this position was '... about forty miles from the place where Captain M'Quhae, R.N., is said to have seen the great sea serpent.' Actually, this position (obviously given in round figures only) is about 120 miles S.W. from M'Quhae's, and that of the *Pekin* about 210 miles W.S.W.

² Or, to quote Mr. A. E. W. Mason's hero, the great Hanaud – 'What is the strongest passion in the world? Avarice? Love? Hatred? None of these things. It is the passion of one public official to take a great big club and hit his brother official on the back of the head.'

considered themselves justified, on the basis of their own experiences, in believing that they had satisfactorily explained away the *Dædalus* and *Castilian* sea-serpents. But if so, they walked in a vain show. As regards the *Dædalus* case, Smith was promptly answered by 'An Officer of H.M.S. *Dædalus*,' whose letter has already been quoted.¹ As he pointed out, no one in his right senses could have mistaken a drifting piece of seaweed for 'a living animal, moving rapidly through the water against a cross sea, and within five points of a fresh breeze, with such velocity that the water was surging under its chest as it passed along.' He was seconded by Harrington, who took up the cudgels with alacrity. Here are some extracts from his reply to Smith² :

'I could no more be deceived than (as a seaman) I could mistake a porpoise for a whale. If it had been at a great distance it would have been different ; but it was not above 20 yards from the ship. . . .

'I am informed by Messrs. Lamport and Holt, shipowners of this place,³ that one of their captains reported a similar thing about two years ago, off the Island of St. Helena ; but they took no further notice of it, supposing . . . that he might have been deceived.

'Twenty people, including Mrs. Harrington and my two officers, saw it as distinctly as I now see the gas light which I am writing by. I am well known in London, having commanded a steam transport during the Russian war. . . .

'Captain Claxton, R.N., of the *Priory*, Battersea, is a personal friend of mine. I am also well known to Sir Colin Campbell, who is now in the East.⁴ My

¹ See p. 101.

² *The Times*, 16, ii. 1858.

³ Liverpool.

⁴ As C-in-C., India, during the Mutiny.

present ship is 1,064 tons new measurement, and a new ship, of which I own a good part myself. There are therefore many reasons (in addition to my holding a first-class certificate in the mercantile marine) to hinder me from propagating a report which can do me no good, and, if untrue, do injury to science in the room of assisting it to elicit the truth in so important a matter as the discovery of the inhabitants of the deep.'

He concludes with an intimation that he will shortly be in London for a few days, and will be glad to meet anyone who is interested in the subject. But although this offer was backed up by a letter from no less a personage than the Secretary to the Admiralty,¹ suggesting that '... it might be worth the while of some of our philosophers to examine a little into the question of what Captain Harrington and his officers really did see,'² it appears to have fallen on deaf ears. Smith made, or rather attempted, a reply to his three adversaries in *The Times* of 23, ii. 1858 – it is not worth quoting – and the controversy ended.

That weed such as was met with by the *Brazilian* and the *Pekin* may, when seen only at a distance, have given rise to one or two sea-serpent stories is unquestionable ; but to regard it as the foundation of the *Dædalus* and *Castilian* reports is an abuse of one's intelligence. One could as easily imagine an Income-tax collector being mistaken for a philanthropist.

¹ Rear-Admiral W. A. B. Hamilton. In those days, and even later, it was not unusual for a naval officer to hold what is now one of the jealously guarded plums of the Civil Service. The last, and one of the best, of the naval Secretaries was Sir George Tryon, afterwards drowned in the *Victoria*.

² *The Times*, same day.

'*Leda*,' 1872.

The following clear and detailed account of a sea-creature seen in the Sound of Sleat, between Skye and the mainland, in August, 1872, is taken from the *Zoologist* of May, 1873.¹ Unfortunately, some of the witnesses desired that their names might not appear in print ; but those of the joint authors of the account are available.

'Appearance of an Animal, believed to be that which is called the Norwegian Sea Serpent, on the Western Coast of Scotland, in August, 1872. By the Rev. JOHN MACRAE, Minister of Glenelg, Inverness-shire, and the Rev. DAVID TWOPENY, Vicar of Stockbury, Kent.

'On the 20th of August, 1872, we started from Glenelg² in a small cutter, the "Leda," for an excursion to Lochourn.³ Our party consisted, besides ourselves, of two ladies, F. and K., a gentleman, G. B.,⁴ and a Highland lad. Our course lay down the Sound of Sleat, which on that side divides the Isle of Skye from the mainland, the average breadth of the channel in that part being two miles. It was calm and sunshiny, not a breath of air, and the sea perfectly smooth.

'As we were getting the cutter along with oars we perceived a dark mass about two hundred yards astern of us, to the north. While we were looking at it with our glasses (we had three on board) another similar black lump rose to the left of the first, leaving an interval between ; then another and another

¹ Pp. 3517-22 of the volume for 1873.

² See Fig. 13.

³ More usually written Loch Hourn.

⁴ From a later report it appears that these were Miss Forbes Macrae, Miss Kate Macrae, and Mr. Gilbert Bogle.

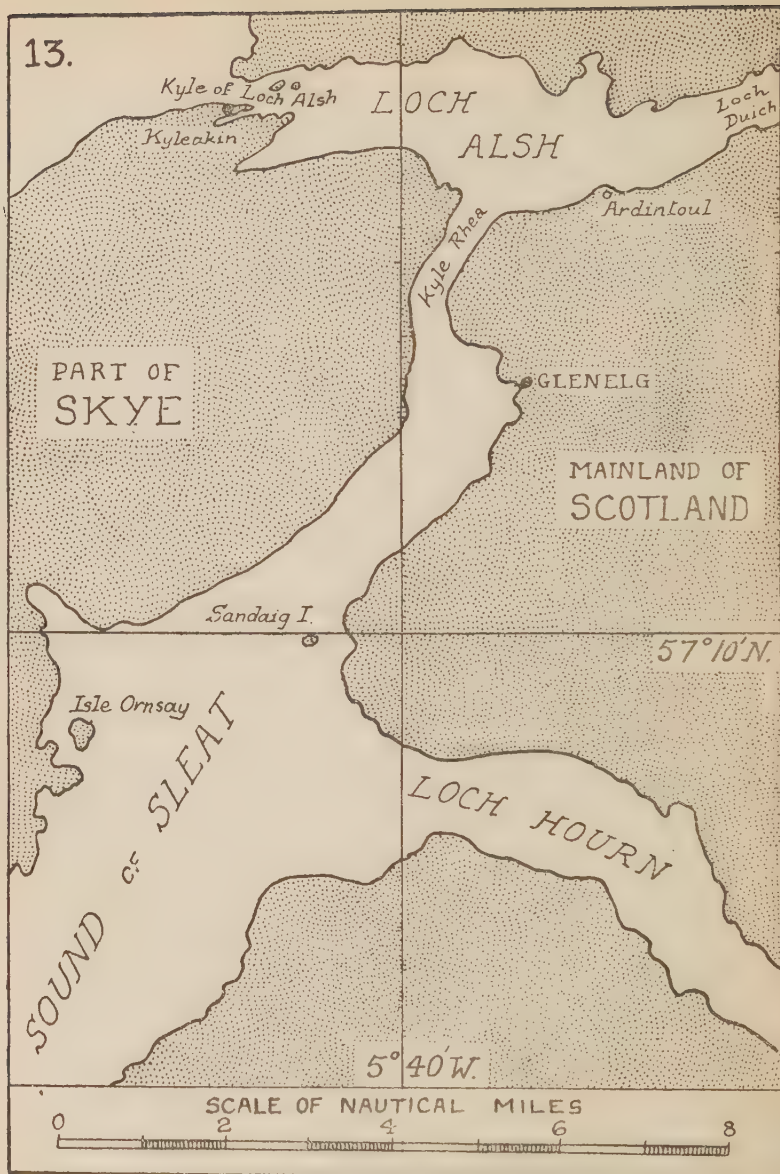


FIG. 13. SOUND OF SLEAT AND LOCH ALSH

followed, all in regular order. We did not doubt its being one living creature : it moved slowly across our wake, and disappeared. Presently the first mass, which was evidently the head, reappeared, and was followed by the rising of the other black lumps, as before. Sometimes three appeared, sometimes four, five, or six, and then sank again. When they rose, the head appeared first, if it had been down, and the lumps rose after it in regular order, beginning always with that next the head, and rising gently ; but when



FIG. 14. SEA-SERPENT SEEN BY THE 'LEDA,' 1872

From *The Zoologist*, May 1873

they sank they sank all together rather abruptly, sometimes leaving the head visible.

'It gave the impression of a creature crooking up its back to sun itself. There was no appearance of undulation ; when the lumps sank, other lumps did not rise in the intervals between them. The greatest number we counted was seven, making eight with the head, as shown in the sketch No. 1.¹ The parts were separated from each other by intervals of about their own length, the head being rather smaller and flatter than the rest, and the nose being very slightly visible

¹ See Fig. 14.

above the water ; but we did not see the head raised above the surface either this or the next day, nor could we see the eye. We had no means of measuring the length with any accuracy ; but taking the distance from the centre of one lump to the centre of the next to be six feet, and it could scarcely be less, the whole length of the portion visible, including the intervals submerged, would be forty-five feet.

‘ Presently, as we were watching the creature, it began to approach us rapidly, causing a great agitation in the sea. Nearly the whole of the body, if not all of it, had now disappeared, and the head advanced at a great rate in the midst of a shower of fine spray, which was evidently raised in some way by the quick movement of the animal, — it did not appear how, — and not by spouting. F. was alarmed and retreated to the cabin, crying out that the creature was coming down upon us. When within about a hundred yards of us it sank and moved away in the direction of Skye, just under the surface of the water, for we could trace its course by the waves it raised on the still sea to the distance of a mile or more. After this it continued at intervals to show itself, careering about at a distance, as long as we were in that part of the Sound, the head and a small part only of the body being visible on the surface ; but we did not again on that day see it so near nor so well as at first. At one time F. and K. and G. B. saw a fin sticking up at a little distance back from the head, but neither of us were then observing.

‘ On our return the next day we were again becalmed on the north side of the opening of Lochourn, where it is about three miles wide, the day warm and sunshiny as before. As we were dragging slowly along in the afternoon the creature again appeared over towards the south side, at a greater distance than we saw it the

first day. It now showed itself in three or four rather long lines, as in the sketch No. 2,¹ and looked considerably longer than it did the day before ; as nearly as we could compute, it looked at least sixty feet in length. Soon it began careering about, showing but a small part of itself, as on the day before, and appeared to be going up Lochourn.

‘ Later in the afternoon, when we were still becalmed in the mouth of Lochourn, and by using the oars had nearly reached the island of Sandaig, it came rushing past us about a hundred and fifty yards to the south, on its return from Lochourn. It went with great rapidity, its black head only being visible through the clear sea, followed by a long trail of agitated water. As it shot along, the noise of its rush through the water could be distinctly heard on board. There were no organs of motion to be seen, nor was there any shower of spray as on the day before, but merely such a commotion in the sea as its quick passage might be expected to make. Its progress was equable and smooth, like that of a log towed rapidly.

‘ For the rest of the day, as we worked our way home northwards through the Sound of Sleat, it was occasionally within sight of us until nightfall, rushing about at a distance, as before, and showing only its head and a small part of its body on the surface. It seemed on each day to keep about us, and as we were always then rowing, we were inclined to think it might perhaps be attracted by the measured sound of the oars. Its only exit in this direction to the north was by the narrow Strait of Kylerhea, dividing Skye from the mainland, and only a third of a mile wide, and we left our boat, wondering whether this strange creature had gone that way or turned back again to the south.

¹ See Fig. 14.

‘ We have only to add to this narration of what we saw ourselves the following instances of its being seen by other people, of the correctness of which we have no doubt :—

‘ The ferrymen on each side at Kylerhea saw it pass rapidly through on the evening of the 21st, and heard the rush of the water : they were surprised, and thought it might be a shoal of porpoises, but could not comprehend their going so quickly. Finlay Macrae, of Bundaloch, in the parish of Kintail, was within the mouth of Lochourn on the 21st, with other men in his boat, and saw the creature at about the distance of one hundred and fifty yards.

‘ Two days after we saw it, Alexander Macmillan, boat-builder at Dornie, was fishing in a boat in the entrance of Lochduich, halfway between Druidag and Castledonan, when he saw the animal, near enough to hear the noise and see the ripple it made in rushing along in the sea. He says that what seemed its head was followed by four or more lumps, or “ half-rounds ” as he calls them, and that they sometimes rose and sometimes sank all together. He estimated its length at not less than between sixty and eighty feet. He saw it also on two subsequent days in Lochduich. On all these occasions his brother Farquhar was with him in the boat, and they were both much alarmed and pulled to the shore in great haste.

‘ A lady at Duisdale, in Skye, a place overlooking the part of the Sound which is opposite the opening of Lochourn, said that she was looking out with a glass when she saw a strange object on the sea which appeared like eight seals in a row. This was just about the time that we saw it.

‘ We were also informed that about the same time it was seen from the island of Eigg, between Eigg and

the mainland, about twenty miles to the south-west of the opening of Lochourn.

‘We have not permission to mention the names in these two last instances.

JOHN MACRAE
DAVID TWOPENY.’

To this very clear and specific report, Mr. Twopeny added a postscript, as follows :

‘P.S. The writers of the above account scarcely expect the public to believe in the existence of the creature which they saw. Rather than that, they look for the disbelief and ridicule to which the subject always gives rise, partly on account of the animal having been pronounced to be a snake, without any sufficient evidence, but principally because of the exaggerations and fables with which the whole subject is beset. Nevertheless they consider themselves bound to leave a record of what they saw, in order that naturalists may receive it as a piece of evidence, or not, according to what they think it is worth.

‘The animal will very probably turn up on these coasts again,¹ and it will be always in that “dead season” so convenient to editors of newspapers, for it is never seen but in the still warm days of summer or early autumn.’

‘There is a considerable probability that it has visited the same coasts before. In the summer of 1871 some large creature was seen for some time rushing about in Lochduich, but it did not show itself sufficiently for any one to ascertain what it was. Also some years back a well-known gentleman of the west coast, now living, was crossing the Sound of Mull, from Mull to

¹ It did. See p. 184.

² See p. 5.

the mainland, "on a very calm afternoon, when," as he writes, "our attention was attracted to a monster which had come to the surface not more than fifty yards from our boat. It rose without causing the slightest disturbance of the sea, or making the slightest noise, and floated for some time on the surface, but without exhibiting its head or tail, showing only the ridge of the back, which was not that of a whale, or any other sea animal that I had ever seen. The back appeared sharp and ridge-like, and in colour very dark, indeed black, or almost so. It rested quietly for a few minutes, and then dropped quietly down into the deep, without causing the slightest agitation. I should say that above forty feet of it, certainly not less, appeared on the surface.

'It should be noticed that the inhabitants of that western coast are quite familiar with the appearance of whales, seals and porpoises, and when they see them they recognise them at once. Whether the creature which pursued Mr. Maclean's boat off the island of Coll in 1808, and of which there is an account in the "Transactions of the Wernerian Society" (vol. I. p. 442)¹, was one of these Norwegian animals, it is not easy to say. Survivors who knew Mr. Maclean say that he could quite be relied on for truth.

'The public are not likely to believe in the creature till it is caught, and that does not seem likely to happen just yet, for a variety of reasons, — one reason being that it has, from all the accounts given of it, the power of moving very rapidly. On the 20th, while we were becalmed in the mouth of Lochourn, a steam launch slowly passed us, and, as we watched it, we reckoned its rate at five or six miles an hour. When the animal rushed past us on the next day at about the same distance,

¹ For Mr. Maclean's account of this creature, see p. 250.

and when we were again becalmed nearly in the same place, we agreed that it went quite twice as fast as the steamer, and we thought that its rate could not be less than ten or twelve miles an hour. It might be shot, but would probably sink. . . .

‘It should be mentioned that when we saw this creature and made our sketches of it we had never seen Pontopidan’s “Natural History” or his print of the Norwegian sea-serpent, which has a most striking resemblance to the first of our own sketches. Considering the great body of reasonable Norwegian evidence, extending through a number of years, which remains after setting aside fables and exaggerations, it seems surprising that no naturalist of that country had ever applied himself to make out something about the animal. In the meantime, as the public will most probably be dubious about quickly giving credit to our account, the following explanations are open to them, all of which have been proposed to me, *viz* :—porpoises, lumps of seaweed, empty herring-barrels, bladders, logs of wood, waves of the sea, and inflated pig-skins ; but as all these theories present to our minds greater difficulties than the existence of the animal itself, we feel obliged to decline them.

‘D. TWOPENY.’

In *Land and Water* for September 1872 there appeared an earlier account of this appearance, also written by Mr. Twopeny. The following extracts are taken from this account :

‘When first we saw it, it was going on at a very leisurely rate, and we saw it capitably, when it suddenly turned and came towards us, but when about 100 yards (as Mr. M.¹ computed, and he is a very accurate observer),

¹ Macrae.

it turned off. It was never nearer to us than this. They were getting the cutter on with sweeps¹ both days ; and it repeatedly came towards us, as if attracted by the rowing. Once on the second day it rushed along at a great rate, scarcely any of it visible, but making a tremendous rush through the water, and the noise was quite audible on board, the sea being quite still, and no wind. As to the size, it must be a good deal guesswork, but if one of the convolutions was six feet (and I can hardly think they could be less) and the intervals between the same, and six feet under water at the tail, it would be ninety-six feet. . . .

' When I saw it the second day a good way off in the opening of Loch Hourn, I thought that if there was a vessel of that length it would be a large one. From that point it was on the second day more or less in sight of us till dusk, going on northwards, as we were going, towards the Kyle Rhea, Skye Ferry² ; and we heard the next day that it passed the ferry with a rushing sound, which was heard by the people on shore. The creature is totally different from the animal which Captain McQuhae saw in 1848. . . . There is scarcely a probability that this is a serpent. I imagine it raises its back to sun itself, and then straightens itself to go quick. As it was approaching us at the nearest, I plainly saw the sea running off its back and the back of its head, as it does from a low flat rock which has been submerged by a wave. . . .

' Mr. M., who is a great naturalist, is greatly interested about the creature. He has all his life been going about on these seas, but never saw or heard (*sic*) anything of the kind before. He knew Mr. Maclean,

¹ Large oars.

² *I.e.* the ferry between Kylerhea and the nearest point of Skye, about 700 yards distant.

the minister of Eigg, who saw it off Coll in June, 1805,¹ and says he was quite a man to be believed. They well know all the sea creatures here, and say there is not the slightest resemblance in them to this animal ; and I have seen porpoises repeatedly, and very different they are. . . .

‘ A word more about “ the beast,” as we call it here. F. thought that the tumult of the water about the neck was caused by a mane lashing about, and it might well have been that, as far as the appearance of the water went, but I saw no mane. The head appeared flattish, and I saw distinctly under the chin, as shown in the sketch.² . . . We could not see the eye. Mr. M. says, very truly, that I shall get the curves more accurately by drawing the whole of the curves, under water and all. In the sketch they are mis-shapen, and a little too high. These convolutions rose easily, and not with a jerk – sometimes three, then four – always one after the other, lying next the head. The largest number I counted was six. Mr. M., who is very accurate, at one time counted eight, including the head.

‘ On the second day, in the latter part of the day, as we were going home in the Sound of Sleat, and the beast at a distance, going about and about, but still the same way, two of our party were both positive that they saw a back fin stick up, when not a very great part of the creature was visible. I did not see it, for I was perfectly tired out, and no longer observing. If the fin exists, it must at other times have been in one of the submerged parts. . . . The first day Mr. Lillingstone’s large schooner yacht was becalmed all day in the Sound with us, that is, from one to two miles off, and I think the people on board must have seen it. They had with

¹ This should be June 1808.

² A slightly elaborated version of No. 1, Fig. 14.

them a steam launch, a noisy concern, with which they were always going about, and that may have kept it off. 'At the distance we saw it the colour appeared black. When the beast was first seen, Kate M. said that the dark ridges were waves caused by the motion of the animal, such as might be in the wake of a steamer, but she soon abandoned this opinion, and was satisfied, as I looked at it, that this was perfectly impossible. The creature was to the north of us, opposite to the sun, which was shining strongly at half-past twelve. No wave could have looked like that on the light side, with the sun shining upon it ; nor do I believe a wave could have been nearly so black with the sun shining behind it. The moment the least fragment appeared, it looked inky black, like the head, as dark as a black slug, and totally different from anything in the water, and I was quite sure that no wave, even in shadow, could have looked like that.

'The next evening we had a ripple in the still sea in long dark lines between us and the sun. I was curious to see how far the creature would have been deeper in tone than these lines if he had passed among them then ; but the only time he appeared just then was when he passed with an audible rush ; scarcely any part of him was visible, and that had water rushing over it.¹ Throughout, whenever he appeared, there was the same blackness, like a black slug, different from anything around. . . .'

I have not been able to trace any published accounts of the appearances here given as hearsay evidence ; those at Kylerhea, Duisdale, Lochduich, etc. There seems no

¹ This rather suggests a celebrated entry in the complaints-book of a Dublin club : 'The hot water in the lavatory was cold to-day, and moreover there was none of it.'

reason to doubt that they occurred substantially as reported.

Several other accounts of the Loch Hourn creature are extant—I have only given those which I regard as the best and fullest. A short narrative by Mr. Macrae appeared in the *Inverness Courier* (August 1872); Oudemans gives two others, received from the Misses Macrae¹; and one by Bogle was published in the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*.² He estimates the creature's visible length at sixty feet, and regards the succession of humps seen as being protuberances on the back of a 'lizard-shaped reptile.' He did not notice any eye or mouth,³ although watching the creature through binoculars (the *Leda* had three pairs on board). He emphasises that he is perfectly familiar with the appearance and habits of whales, seals, porpoises, &c., and that the creature seen by himself and his party bore no resemblance to any of these.

¹Both of these are short, and one unimportant, while the other (Miss K. Macrae's) chiefly refers to two sketches which Oudemans does not reproduce. She states, however, that on one occasion, when the creature was about a mile off, she saw a triangular fin sticking up from it, which she estimated to be ten feet in height: See *The Great Sea-Serpent*, pp. 578, 579.

²31, xii, 1877.

³Capt. Dean makes the same remark about *Hilary's* sea-serpent (1917). See p. 213.

CH. VI.

H.M.S. 'OSBORNE,' 1877

IN June 1877, Commander H. L. Pearson, R.N., commanding the Royal Yacht *Osborne*, transmitted to the Admiralty a report relating to a 'Sea Monster seen off the North Coast of Sicily' – such is the description of it in the Admiralty records. This report is of particular interest, since it can safely be assumed that officers serving in the Royal yachts are not in the habit of seeking newspaper publicity.

Unfortunately, the original report, like Captain M'Quhae's, is no longer available. It has not been deliberately destroyed – 'weeded' – as its predecessor was, but appears to have been lost. Its history, so far as I can trace it, is as follows.

It was forwarded to the Admiralty on June 11th, 1877, by Admiral Sir George Elliott, Commander-in-Chief at Portsmouth. Apparently, it was not, as in the *Dædalus* case, specifically asked for by Their Lordships. It was minuted in office by the Hydrographer,¹ to this effect :

'This is a subject of interest, but before further action is taken, I would suggest that the papers be sent to the Home Office for an expression of opinion from the Inspector of Fisheries, Mr. F. Buckland.'

I cannot imagine what 'further action' the Hydrographer proposed to take – nor do I think that he had any clear ideas on the subject himself. The reference to Buckland

¹ Captain F. J. O. Evans, R.N., C.B., F.R.S.

was a judicious move. He had made a name as a versatile writer and lecturer on natural history, and was at the time in active Government employment as an Inspector of Fisheries under the Home Office – a department of which then undertook some of the work now performed by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. At the same time, it is difficult to understand why the papers were not submitted in the first place to Owen, who was still alive (he did not die until 1892, aged 88) – and who, also, held a Government appointment, that of Superintendent of the Natural History Museum.¹ As will be seen, Buckland consulted him on the point, and transmitted his opinion to the Admiralty.

On July 30th the Home Office returned Pearson's report to the Admiralty, together with Buckland's comments. I imagine (although it does not appear from the papers) that Buckland wrote a private letter, asking Admiralty permission to publish the correspondence in his paper, *Land and Water*. On August 7th the Admiralty replied, asking that their thanks might be conveyed to Buckland for his 'very interesting report,' and that he might be informed that they had no objection to his publishing the correspondence – for which purpose they sent back the original enclosures, requesting that these might be returned when done with.

Unfortunately, they were not – at least, there is no trace of them in the Admiralty files. I am still uncertain whether they remained at the office of *Land and Water* – which is now defunct ; whether they were shelved, in error, at the Home Office ; or whether Buckland (*ob.* 1880) retained them. In any case, it does not seem very likely that they are still in existence ; and they are certainly not available for reference.

¹ He resigned this six years later, in 1883.

In consequence, it is necessary to fall back upon the extracts, from the reports, which appeared in *Land and Water* ; and to supplement these by contemporary accounts appearing in other papers. Here, in the first place, is the *Land and Water*¹ version. The text of the reports, as summarised by Buckland, runs :

‘ Commander Pearson, of the royal yacht Osborne, in forwarding the accounts of the three officers of that yacht, who saw the sea monster off the coast of Sicily on the 2nd of June last, writes : — “ I myself saw the fish^b through a telescope, but at too great a distance (about 400 yards) to be able to give a detailed description ; but distinctly saw the “ seal-shaped head, of immense size, large flappers, and part of huge body.”^c ‘ Lieutenant Haynes² writes, under date, “ Royal Yacht Osborne, Gibraltar, June 6 : — On the evening of that day, the sea being perfectly smooth, my attention was first called by seeing a ridge of fins above the surface of the water, extending about thirty feet, and varying from five to six feet in height. On inspecting it by means of a telescope, at about one and a-half cables’ distance, I distinctly saw a head, two flappers, and about thirty feet of an animal’s shoulder. The head, as nearly as I could judge, was about six feet thick, the neck narrower, about four to five feet, the shoulder about fifteen feet across, and the flappers each about fifteen feet in length. The movements of the flappers were those of a turtle, and the animal resembled a huge seal, the resemblance being strongest about the back of the head.^c I could not see the length of the head, but from its crown or top to just below the

¹ 8, ix. 1877.

b-k For the explanation of these reference-letters, see p. 163.

² Navigating Lieutenant William P. Haynes, R.N.

shoulder (where it became immersed), I should reckon about fifty feet. The tail end I did not see, being under water, unless the ridge of fins to which my attention was first attracted, and which had disappeared by the time I got a telescope, were really the continuation of the shoulder to the end of the object's body.

The animal's head was not always above water, but



FIG. 15. 'RIDGE OF FINS,' seen from H.M.S. *Osborne*, 2, vi. 1877

From *Land and Water*, 8, ix. 1877

was thrown upwards, remaining above for a few seconds at a time, and then disappearing.^f There was an entire absence of 'blowing' or 'spouting.' I herewith beg to enclose a sketch (A)¹ showing the view of the 'ridge of fins,' and (B)² of the animal in the act of propelling itself by its two fins."

'Mr. Douglas M. Forsyth³ writes, under date, Royal

¹ See Fig. 15.

² See Fig. 16.

³ Lieutenant R.N.

Yacht Osborne, at sea, June 4, 1877 :—“ At five p.m. on the 2nd inst., while passing Cape St. Vito, north coast of Sicily, I observed a large, black-looking object on the starboard quarter, distant about two cables,¹ and on examining it with a telescope, I found

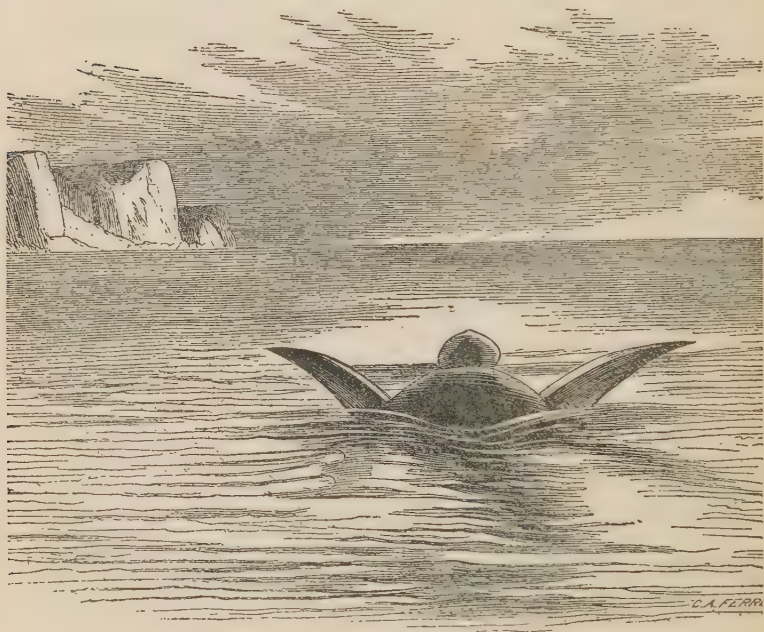


FIG. 16. H.M.S. 'OSBORNE'S' SEA MONSTER

From *Land and Water*, 8, ix. 1877

NOTE.—The creature is represented as seen 'end-on,' and swimming directly away from the observer.

it to be a huge monster, having a head about fifteen to twenty feet in length. The breadth I could not observe. The head was round, and full at the crown. The animal was slowly swimming in a south-easterly direction, propelling itself by means of two large flappers or fins, somewhat in the manner of a seal.^h

¹ 400 yards.

I also saw a portion of the body of the animal, and that part was certainly not under forty-five or fifty feet in length."

'Mr. Moore,¹ engineer of the royal yacht Osborne, writes ; — "When looking over the starboard quarter of the ship, my attention was called by observing an uneven ridge of what appeared to me to be the fins of a fish above the surface of the water, about a cable's lengthⁱ distance from the ship. They varied in height, and, as near as I can judge, from seven to eight feet above water, and extended about forty feet^k along the surface. Not having a telescope with me, I regret I am unable to give you a further description."

Here is another account, from *The Times* of June 14th.²

'The Osborne, 2,* paddle Royal yacht, Commander Hugh L. Pearson, which arrived at Portsmouth from the Mediterranean on Monday,⁴ and at once proceeded to her moorings in the harbour, has forwarded an official report to the Admiralty, through the Commander-in-Chief (Admiral Sir George Elliott, K.C.B.), respecting a sea monster which she encountered during her homeward voyage.

'At about 5 o'clock in the afternoon of the 2d inst., the sea being exceptionally calm, while the yacht was proceeding round the north coast of Sicily towards Cape Vito, the officer on the watch observed a long ridge of fins, each about six feet long, moving slowly along. He called for a telescope, and was at once joined by other officers. The *Osborne* was steaming westward at 10½ knots an hour, and, having a long passage before her, could not stay to make minute observations.

¹ William Moore, second engineer of the ship.

² Quoted from the *Portsmouth Times*.

³ *I.e.* mounting two guns (for saluting purposes). ⁴ 11, vi. 1877.

' The fins were progressing in an eastwardly direction, and as the vessel more nearly approached them, they were replaced by the foremost part of a gigantic sea monster. Its skin was, so far as could be seen, altogether devoid of scales, appearing rather to resemble in sleekness that of a seal. The head was bullet-shaped, with an elongated termination, being somewhat similar in form to that of a seal, and was about six feet in diameter. Its features were only seen by one officer, who described them as like those of an alligator. The neck was comparatively narrow, but so much of the body as could be seen developed in form like that of a gigantic turtle, and from each side extended two fins, about 15ft. in length, by which the monster paddled itself along after the fashion of a turtle.

' The appearance of the monster is accounted for by a submarine volcano, which occurred (*sic*) north of Galita, in the Gulf of Tunis, about the middle of May, and was reported at the time by a steamer which was struck by a detached fragment of submarine rock. The disturbance below water, it is thought probable, may have driven up the monster from its " native element," as the site of the eruption is only 100 miles from where it was reported to have been¹ seen.'

The suggestion about the submarine volcano, of course, is sheer '*post hoc, ergo propter hoc*.' Incidentally, Galita is not in the Gulf of Tunis.

Finally, the *Graphic* of June 30th² published another account by Lieutenant Haynes, accompanied by what appear to be fairly close copies of the two sketches

¹ Misprinted 'beeen.'

² The *Illustrated London News* says nothing whatever about the Osborne's sea-serpent. Apparently, it was piqued that its newly-founded rival, the *Graphic*, had got there first.

enclosed in Pearson's report and subsequently reproduced in *Land and Water*. I imagine that Haynes retained his original sketches, and supplied copies of them both to Pearson and to the *Graphic*. His account is short, and as it differs somewhat from his Admiralty version I give it in full :

' My attention was first called by seeing a long row of fins appearing above the surface of the water at a distance of about 200 yards from the ship, and " away on our beam." They were of irregular heights, and extending about 30 or 40 feet in line (the former number is the length I gave, the latter the other officers), in a few seconds they disappeared, giving place to the foremost part of the monster.

' By this time it had passed astern, swimming in an opposite direction to that we were steering, and as we were passing through the water at $10\frac{1}{2}$ knots, I could only get a view of it, " end on," which I have shown in the sketch. The head was bullet-shaped, and quite 6 feet thick, the neck narrow, and its head was occasionally thrown back out of the water, remaining there for a few seconds at a time. It was very broad across the back or shoulders, about 15 or 20 feet, and the flappers appeared to have a semi-revolving motion, which seemed to paddle the monster along. They were about 15 feet in length. From the top of the head to the part of the back where it became immersed, I should consider 50 feet, and that seemed about a third of the whole length. All this part was smooth, resembling a seal. I cannot account for the fins unless they were on the back below where it was immersed.'

I have examined the *Osborne's* log : but, as in the case of H.M.S. *Dædalus*, it contains no mention of the

encounter with the 'Sea Monster.' It affords, however, a good deal of collateral information.

It is apparent, from the wording of the three accounts given in *Land and Water*, that the *Osborne's* commander had called for reports (in writing) from such officers as had seen the creature closely. It is also apparent, from *The Times's* account, that Haynes was officer of the watch at the time when it was seen. Yet the *Osborne's* log for the first dog-watch (4-6 p.m.) is not initialled by Haynes, but by Lieutenant Hugh G. Gough, the ship's first lieutenant. Haynes signs for the 'last-dog' (6-8 p.m.). I imagine that, owing to some private arrangement between Gough and Haynes, the latter was relieving him, temporarily, when the monster was sighted. This may possibly account for the fact that there is no entry of this incident in the log – although I incline to believe that, as also in the case of the *Dædalus*, such was designedly omitted.

According to the log, the *Osborne* was steaming $10\frac{1}{2}$ knots, with a jib and fore trysail set – no doubt to steady her.¹ Her position at 5 p.m., so far as can be worked out from her noon-position, was about $38^{\circ} 17' N.$, $12^{\circ} 53' E.$ – half-way across the Gulf of Castellamare, and about eight miles from land, in some 450 fathoms of water.

The 'remarks' column of the log merely records :

' 3.12. Passed C. De Gallo.

' 5.45. Passed C. De Vito.'

The weather, both at 4 p.m. and at 6 p.m., is logged as 'b c' – bright, with detached clouds.

¹ It should be remembered that the *Osborne* was a paddle steamer, and that a little canvas might steady her appreciably, and so greatly improve her steaming. It is of very little value, as I can testify from experience, to a screw steamer.

So far as I can trace, the incident did not arouse anything like the universal interest excited by the *Dædalus* story. It occurred when the public mind and the illustrated Press were chiefly occupied with the Russo-Turkish war ; and its ' news-value ' suffered in consequence. But it received a good deal of critical examination. Buckland, to whom the Admiralty had applied for his opinion as to the ' monster's ' nature, consulted several other authorities — Owen, A. D. Bartlett (Superintendent of the Zoological Gardens), Captain David Gray (a well-known whaler) and Henry Lee, a brother naturalist.¹ These opinions, together with his own, he published in *Land and Water*²: and, since they represent a body of informed opinion based upon better material than appears to be now available, I propose to give extracts from them.

The interest attaching to Owen's views is chiefly psychological. They throw no light on the nature of the animal, but a good deal upon his own mentality, and the changes which it had undergone during the twenty-nine years which had elapsed since he wrote his letter on the *Dædalus* case. Then, he had discussed the evidence carefully, and had put forward a theory (unwarranted, but plausible) to cover the reported facts. Now, he wrote a short, sneering letter, which can be boiled down to ' I can't trust the observers, who were ignorant and lazy.'

In case it may be thought that I am not presenting the matter fairly, here is the full text of his opinion. I should premise that it consists largely of comments upon various points, distinguished by letters, in the original reports — which are not now available. Still, I think that most of the points can be identified. I have inserted, in the text of the

¹ Buckland transmitted Owen's opinion, and Bartlett's, to the Admiralty ; the others, apparently, were obtained later.

² 8, ix. 1877.

reports as given by Buckland, Owen's reference-letters (except a and d, for which no apposite text is available), placing them in what seem to be the most likely positions.

' I have carefully perused and considered the documents from the Admiralty and Home Office which you submitted to me, and have added to them initial letters which refer to the following remarks :—

' (Capt. Pearson's letter of June 11)

- a. The object or phenomena may have been of a nature unknown to the observers, but were not necessarily caused by a monster.
- b. The appearances may not have been caused by a fish.
- c. The words between "—" denote rather a cetacean than a "fish" or "monster"; but, viewed at the distance given, the ideas thereby excited and expressed are of no help or value to the naturalist.
- d. *See* note a.

' (Lieut. Haynes' letter.)

- e. Phenomena noted through a telescope, at the distance given, by one not conversant with natural history, are very seldom available to one who is; the present case is no exception.
- f. The period during which the object was watched, or uninterrupted observation of the phenomena made, should have been noted, in order to found an opinion of the bearing of this remark.

' (Lieut. Forsyth's letter.)

- g. *See* note a.
- h. A seal propels itself chiefly by its hind pair of flippers, which stretch backward beyond the tail, to part of which they are attached.

'(Mr. Moore's letter.)'

i. compare with Lieut. Forsyth's statement.

k. Compare with Lieut. Haynes' statement.

'The discrepancies in the records of the watchers of the same phenomena show the difficulty of exact observation at the distances and under the circumstances of the case, both ship and object or objects being on the move ; and remarks thereon by observers not conversant with natural history, and so situated, preclude the formation of any opinion worth recording of the nature of the object or objects causing the phenomena as interpreted by the foregoing witnesses.

'But although the statements and terms applied be insufficient to enable the naturalist to recognise the subject thereof, they by no means afford ground for concluding that what was seen was afforded by an object unknown and unrecorded in natural history ; there are no grounds for calling it a 'sea monster.' I beg to call attention to the paragraph concluding the 'Manual of Zoology' in the 'Admiralty Manual of Scientific Enquiry,' 12mo, 3rd. ed., 1859 :—

'When an object is seen afloat, and attracts notice by its magnitude or other peculiarity, and is not captured, its nearest approach to the ship, its mode, course, and rate of progression, and the parts actually recognisable should be noted at the time with the utmost accuracy. If practicable, a boat should be put off for close observation and possible capture.

'If the observer has not the zoological knowledge, or the opportunity for exact inspection, requisite for determining the species from the phenomena, he should abstain from giving the object any special name. Supposing it to be an animal, a shot fired, if even it do not hit, may so alarm the creature as to cause some

sudden movement which may reveal more of its true nature.'

This, be it noted, is not written by an Admiralty clerk, but by a scientist of international reputation. Its peevish tone is perhaps less difficult to understand when one learns that the instructions which Owen cites were drawn up by himself.¹ Apart from this, it should be remembered that he was seventy-three.

Still, his 'opinion,' even then, discredits him (I submit) more than it does those observers whom he stigmatises as ignorant and negligent. What man, in his sober senses, would expect to get better conditions for observing a freely-swimming creature on the high seas than fine weather, broad daylight, a calm sea, a nearest approach of two hundred yards or so, and the use of a telescope? Yet these are the exact circumstances of the case – and, according to Owen, they preclude the taking of any observations which would be of value to a naturalist!

Again, it is surely hypercritical to complain that one observer saw the fins extending 'about thirty feet' and another 'about forty'; or that one thought that they were about a cable and a half distant, and the other a cable. Such eye-estimates would be within ordinary limits of error even if they had been made at exactly the same instant – an assumption for which there is no evidence at all; while it is undisputed that the *Osborne* was steaming at ten knots or so, and that the creature was also swimming in the opposite direction. And it is almost childish to complain that the witnesses spoke of a huge, strange-looking creature as a 'monster.'

¹ Owen does not quote them quite accurately – for example, he has inserted the words 'and possible capture.' They originally appeared in 1849. I cannot dissociate the instructions, about not giving such creatures a name, from M'Quhae's 'serpent' of the preceding year.

'Monster' is not a 'special name': it is not a name at all, but a general term – and, in the circumstances, a very suitable one.

One wonders whether Owen found special cause for irritation in the fact that the *Osborne's* monster 'resembled a huge seal.' Here was the very creature into which (to his own satisfaction, at least) he had resolved the *Dædalus's* sea-serpent – but, unfortunately, this time it was much too large. If its length had been given at, say, forty feet instead of a hundred and fifty or so, who can doubt that, despite the intrinsic rarity of sea-elephants in the Mediterranean, it would have been hailed as conclusive proof that Owen had been brilliantly right in 1848? But although he had made no bones about reducing the *Dædalus's* monster from a part-length of sixty feet to a total length of thirty, he may well have thought that this plan, in view of the numerous dimensions given for various parts of the body, was scarcely applicable now. In any case, he declined the task. His 'opinion' is a confession of failure – nominally, failure to form any opinion about the reported facts; actually, failure to explain them away.

Buckland, a friend and to some extent a disciple of Owen, followed on the same tack. He begins by quoting Owen to the effect that there has never been a case of a sea-serpent which could not be explained by natural causes, such as a line of porpoises or other creatures, ribbon-fish, giant squid, floating logs, seaweed, etc. With an impartiality which is most praiseworthy, but slightly confusing, he next proceeds to give an account of the appearances in the Sound of Sleat in 1872,¹ without a word of criticism or suggested explanation. Having thus contrived to sit – somewhat insecurely – on

¹ See pp. 141–153.

the fence, he suggests that the 'ridge of fins' seen from the *Osborne* may have been the back fins of four basking-sharks swimming in single file. He explains this theory by a sketch, but omits to state that the basking-shark is not a native of the Mediterranean. As an alternative, he suggests a 'herd' of swordfish. The main item of the *Osborne* reports – the huge seal-like creature seen after the 'ridge of fins' had disappeared – he does not mention at all : there is not a line in his report to suggest that he had ever heard of it.

Captain David Gray, of Peterhead, a whaler of thirty years' Arctic experience, expressed the opinion¹ that what the *Osborne* saw was a whale ; or, rather (in view of the dimensions reported), more than one, swimming close together. He based this view on Fig. 16, but attempted no explanation of the slender neck and round head.

Lee, who had hitherto held a strong opinion that the so-called sea-serpents, when not otherwise explicable, were actually giant squid,² admitted that neither the *Dædalus* nor *Osborne* cases could be covered by this supposition. He continues :

' I believe, therefore, that in both of these instances an animal has been seen which is either totally unknown to science, or which has hitherto been believed to be extinct.

' Other appearances described cannot be explained away as having been produced by sharks, whales, seals, cuttles, ribbon-fish, or logs of wood covered with

¹ In conversation with Buckland. It is fair to note that Gray was a man very much above the average of his calling as regards the interest he took in matters scientific.

² See, on this point, his *Sea Monsters Unmasked* (London, 1883), *passim*. He re-affirmed, here, his former view of the *Dædalus* case.

barnacles and seaweed ; and to insist on attributing them to one of these, or some other familiar object, is to assume that the stay-at-home naturalist has perfect cognisance of every existing marine animal of large size, and that the sea-going eye-witness is so inexperienced and uninstructed that his assertion that what he saw was none of these, is worthless. I cannot regard such an assumption in either case as warrantable. . . .

'The evidence is, to my mind, conclusive that enormous animals, with which zoologists are at present unacquainted, exist in the "great and wide sea," and I look forward hopefully to the capture of one or more of them, and the settlement of this vexed question.'

I am not sure whether this was written after reading Owen's opinion, already quoted ; from internal evidence, I should be inclined to suppose that it was.

Finally, I should like to summarise the opinion sent in by A. D. Bartlett, Superintendent of the Zoological Gardens. Admittedly, he was not of Owen's scientific standing, but he was probably as expert a practical naturalist as Buckland, and he seems to have possessed the gift of a temperate and open mind ; although not, unfortunately, that of a clear style in writing. He begins, quite logically, by enquiring as to the character and credibility of the witnesses. A hoax played by Queen's officers is unthinkable – he takes it for granted that they describe, as well as they can, what they saw. He also assumes that, from their trained habits of observation, they are not likely to have been misled by porpoises, sharks, whales, etc. Conceding that they saw 'some large animal,' he is quite baffled to identify it. It is

obviously not a serpent, which has no flippers ; nor is it a monster turtle, which could hardly exhibit a row of fins ; whales and porpoises are ruled out ; and no number of sharks, he thinks, could cover all the reported appearances. He finds no difficulty in concluding that it was a single living sea-creature of unknown species. The following passage epitomises his views, and illustrates his style :

‘ In conclusion, I cannot shut my eyes to the many reports and statements made from time immemorial by persons far above suspicion of fraud or deception, and whose lives have been, for the most part, spent at sea, and whose knowledge of the appearances of marine animals commonly seen entitles them to our most serious consideration.

‘ These more recent instances recorded by honest and trustworthy persons satisfy me that it is not only unfair, unwise and a great mistake, to disregard and throw overboard, as it were, the evidence brought by these different observers, simply because we cannot at present define exactly by specimens or otherwise, the exact nature of the creatures observed.’

So much for the *Osborne* case, as discussed at the time. The Admiralty, of course, took no ‘ further action ’ as to Buckland’s report ; and I have failed to discover any official notice taken of Commander Pearson’s. If Their Lordships passed on to him Owen’s remarks about the ‘ Admiralty Manual of Scientific Enquiry ’ – a book which it is quite possible that, like many other naval officers, he had never had either the time or the inclination to read – I should much have liked to hear his comments. All the same, it is quite true that, as Owen

(and David Gray) remarked, it would have been of great advantage if he had put his helm over, and tried to get closer to the monster.¹ This was moving but slowly, and *Osborne*, steaming $10\frac{1}{2}$ knots, apparently had the advantage in speed. But to 'bout ship' at sea takes time – and it calls for some explanation in the log; it is a thing not done without sufficient reason. Pearson would, as a matter of course, have done it to pick up a man fallen overboard, or a shipwrecked boat's crew; but it is one thing to save life, and another to gratify curiosity; particularly when you are making a long passage in a paddle-steamer, and have the advantage of present fine weather, with the chance of worse later. Even if Pearson had been on deck – he obviously wasn't – when the creature was sighted, I question whether he would have turned round to close it.

Yet it is much to be regretted that he didn't, for while the conditions for observation (or, at least, most of them) were excellent, the observations themselves were made from a very unfavourable view-point – almost right astern of the animal, which was seen end-on. Hence the curious appearance which it presents in Fig. 16. A closer approach, preferably giving a broadside view of the creature, would have cleared up several very perplexing points in the description – particularly the relation, if any, of the 'ridge of fins' to the subsequent appearances. As Lee well remarks,² 'the combination of them (the fins) with long flippers, and the turtle-like mode of swimming, forms a zoological enigma which I am unable to solve.' Oudemans³ goes the length of suggesting that

¹ As to Owen's complaint that no gun was fired, it is sufficient to point out that the *Osborne's* total armament consisted of two signal-carronades and a supply of blank ammunition.

² In his *Sea Monsters Unmasked*. ³ *The Great Sea-Serpent*, p. 350.

the fins first seen had no connection with the creature which rose into sight immediately afterwards. This merely gives us two enigmas instead of one. The fins – seven or eight in a line, and standing six or seven feet out of the water – were, in themselves, as unusual a sight, and one as difficult to explain, as the creature with huge seal-like head, slender neck, and giant flippers, which replaced them. One such sight was remarkable enough : that two should occur – in precisely the same spot – at an interval not exceeding a few seconds, and that the two should yet be completely independent, defies belief. However inconvenient theorists may find the ‘ridge of fins,’ these cannot, I suggest, be dismissed in this airy fashion, for they formed an integral portion of the evidence – and, presumably, of the ‘sea-monster.’¹

¹ See p. 273.

CH. VII. INTERLUDE : THE MOHA MOHA

It may be thought that this chapter — describing what seems to have been a monster turtle, observed on shore — is somewhat out of place in a book dealing with reported appearances of the sea-serpent. But, as already explained, it is not claimed that such appearances were, in every case, those of the same, or even a similar creature ; there is at least a suggestion in the *Osborne* case, and that of the *Valhalla* (related in the following chapter) that what was seen somewhat resembled a monster turtle ; the creature now to be described, the ‘ Moha Moha ’ of Queensland, falls under the same description, and would, if met with afloat, exhibit similar characteristics ; and the account given of it (which is not, apparently, too well known) is very interesting and appears to be authentic. On the other hand, it must be noted that it depends largely on the evidence of a single witness.

The witness in question was a Miss S. Lovell, a school-teacher living at Sandy Cape, Great Sandy Island, Queensland. The island, which is some seventy miles long north and south, forms the eastern shore of Hervey Bay, and Sandy Cape is its northern extremity. A lighthouse stands on the cape, and forms the nucleus of a small white community. It was in this vicinity that the ‘ Moha Moha ’ was seen in June 1890.

I believe that accounts of the event appeared soon afterwards in the local Press, but the earliest which I have been able to consult is one in *Land and Water* for 3, i. 1891. A ‘ constant reader,’ cautiously signing

himself 'TEMPUS OMNIA MONSTRAT,' forwarded a drawing of the creature, copied by himself from a sketch sent home by Miss Lovell. I have not reproduced this drawing, because Miss Lovell afterwards objected to it as being inaccurate — although it does not differ markedly from her own sketch, which is shown in Fig. 17. But accompanying the drawing was an extract from Miss Lovell's letter, as follows (no date or address) :

'... We have had a visit from a monster turtle fish. I send a sketch of it. It let me stand for half an hour



FIG. 17. THE MOHA MOHA

Re-drawn from Savile-Kent's *Great Barrier Reef*

NOTE.—The dome-shaped central portion is intended for the creature's carapace.

within five feet of it. When tired of my looking at it, it put its large neck and head into the water and swept round seaward, raising its huge dome-shaped body about five feet out of water, and put its twelve feet of fish-like tail over the dry shore, elevating it at an angle. Then, giving its tail a half twist, it shot off like a flash of lightning, and I saw its tail in the air about a quarter of a mile off, where the steamers anchor.

'It has either teeth or serrated jaw-bones. Native blacks call it 'Moka, moka,'¹ and say they like to eat it, and that it has legs and fingers. I did not see its legs, as they were in the water. What I saw of it was

¹ It appeared later that the recipient had misread this name — it should be 'Moha Moha.'

about 27 ft. or 28 ft., but I think it must be 30 ft. in all. Whilst its head was out of water it kept its mouth open, and, as I could not see any nostrils, I fancy it breathes through its mouth. The jaws are about 18 in. in length ; the head and neck greenish white, with large white spots on the neck, and a band of white round a very black eye and round upper and lower jaws.

‘The body was dome-shaped, about 8 ft. across and 5 ft. high, smooth, and slate-grey in colour. Tail about 12 ft., the fish part wedge-shaped, and fin of chocolate-brown. Then beautiful silver shading to white scales size of thumb nail.’

The editor of *Land and Water* felt it incumbent on him to remark upon this anomalous and polychromatic creature ; and, fortifying himself with expert authority, he appended the following :

‘ . . . In the opinion of the authorities (at the Natural History Museum) this turtle is the *Carettochelys*, a monster turtle known to exist at the mouth of the Fly River,¹ New Guinea, which has a very long neck. The museum at Sydney possesses the only known specimen. . . .’

He must have misunderstood what he was told. The specimen in question, a published description of which was then available,² is considerably smaller than an ordinary turtle, its total length not exceeding thirty inches.

‘The length and shape of the tail, as described, are,

¹ The Fly River is some 1,100 miles from Sandy Cape.

² *Proceedings of the Linnean Society of New South Wales*, 1886. The account is by a competent naturalist, Dr. E. P. Ramsay.

however, *impossible*,¹ as no turtles have caudal appendages corresponding to the description, and the fair observer must have been mistaken on this very important point. . . .’

The ‘fair observer’ was not long in replying,² with justifiable indignation, to this very unfair comment.

‘ . . . I received from my sister your account and drawing of the *Moha Moha*, which is not correctly drawn. I send a rough sketch. You speak of the impossible length of its tail. I beg to state this is *a most astounding statement*³ from people who have never seen this monster, half fish, half tortoise. The tail was over the dry shore for half an hour, so close to me, that five footsteps would have enabled me to put my hand upon it. . . .’

After repeating, in much the same words, her description of the tail’s appearance, she continues :

‘ . . . The blacks, who had not seen it on the day I did, named it at once from my sketch, which must, therefore, be pretty accurate, and called it “Moha, Moha,” and laughed and said “Saucy fellow, Meebee,” in English, “dangerous turtle.”

‘ It is eight years since it attacked the black’s camp. It can stand upright, and it put its legs on the shoulders of a powerful black, 6ft. high, and knocked him down. That year it invaded their camp, and nearly caught one man by the leg. For months after the blacks camped inland. . . . It is not a turtle, but a monster,

¹ My italics.

² *Land and Water*, 25, iv. 1891.

³ My italics.

half fish, half tortoise, with the carapace perfectly round in front.

S. LOVELL.'

'Sandy Cape, Maryborough, March 4.'

Nothing daunted, the editor returned to the fray, with more random assertions and a somewhat peculiar syntax.

'With no wish to cast any doubt on our fair correspondent's veracity and powers of observation, we must adhere to the editorial remarks made in our issue of January 3, and point out to her that from a scientific point of view, the existence of a creature combining the characteristics of a fish, together with those of a tortoise, are (*sic*) absolutely impossible. . . .'

His knowledge of palæontology, apparently, was slight. The extinct *Pterichthys* and *Drepanaspis* seem to have existed for the express purpose of refuting his assertion.

' . . . A large and very fierce variety of turtle (*Triolix*) are (*sic*) well known to inhabit Queensland, and several instances have been known of their attacking men. . . .'

'*Triolix*,' presumably, is a misprint for *Trionyx*. But while it may be 'well-known' in London that these, and other Australian chelonia, are very fierce and sometimes attack men, this fact (singularly enough) is still unknown in Australia. Savile-Kent, in his *Great Barrier Reef*,¹ remarks ' . . . while these may be long-necked . . . they are by no means of large size, and, though exhibiting a certain amount of defensive pugnacity when captured, they can scarcely be styled ferocious, man-attacking species.'

¹ *The Great Barrier Reef of Australia*, by W. Savile-Kent, F.L.S., F.Z.S. (London, *n.d.*—about 1893).

The editor goes on to suggest that Miss Lovell should study Gould's *Mythical Monsters*¹ :

' In this she will find all sorts of supposed monsters figured, including the sea serpent, and . . . form an opinion as to how difficult and well-nigh impossible it is for the scientific world to place any credence in mere statements and descriptions without any tangible material to enable them to identify the supposed creatures. . . . '

(How does one ' identify ' a creature new to science ?)

' Our correspondent must not suppose that we doubt her having seen some abnormal monster, but we cannot believe that it is ' half fish half tortoise ' as she describes, and the only solution we can offer is that the monster tortoise had clasped by its nether limbs, and had pressed against its abdomen some very large fish, the upper part of whose body was thus concealed, while the tail projected behind, and gave the tortoise the appearance of having a fish's tail. . . . '

Why the ' tortoise ' should clasp the (20-foot or so) fish, except to eat it ; why the latter should endure this process with absolute calm for half an hour and then suddenly come to life ; and why it should still remain so gripped by the ' tortoise,' when the latter was swimming, as to give the impression of a single creature, he does not attempt to explain. But he makes one sensible remark :

' . . . We lay no stress on the evidence of the *blacks*, as all coloured races are greatly given to exaggeration and invention.'

¹ *Mythical Monsters*, by Charles Gould [no relation] (London, 1886).

and he concludes by assuring his 'fair correspondent' that :

'We shall be very glad to hear further from her at any time, and trust she may be able to throw some additional light on, *and produce some satisfactory evidence as to*, the existence of these marine monsters.'

In view of the unfortunate remark which I have italicised, it is scarcely surprising that his expectations were disappointed.

Savile-Kent included an account of Miss Lovell's experience in his *Great Barrier Reef*.¹ I am not sure that she was exactly pleased with his discussion of it. The editor of *Land and Water* had been serious, even if dogmatic and sciolistic : Savile-Kent waxed gently facetious over the potentialities, financial and otherwise, of a 'new and alderman-enthralling brand of turtle soup,' prepared from what he proposed to call *Chelosauria Lovelli*. But at least he performed a distinct service by obtaining from Miss Lovell an expanded account of her adventure, and corroborative evidence from white witnesses.

Here is her account, which was illustrated by the sketch from which Fig. 17 is taken. It should be noted that it gives her considered views, but was written at a considerable time after the event, while that already quoted is an extract from a contemporary letter.

'I was (while walking on the Sandy Island beach) admiring the stillness of the sea, it being a dead calm, when my eye caught sight of the head and neck of a creature I had never seen before.'

¹ Pp. 322-7.

² Savile-Kent remarks (p. 323) : 'She (Miss Lovell) takes a keen interest in all local natural history matters . . .'

‘ I went to the edge of the water and saw a huge animal, lying at full length, which was not at all disturbed by my close proximity to it, enabling me to observe the glossy skin of the head and neck, smooth and shiny as satin.¹ Its great mouth was wide open all the time it was out of the water.

‘ In about a quarter of an hour or so it put its head and neck slowly into the sea, closing its jaws as it did so. I then saw what a long neck it had, as it moved round in a half circle, and also perceived that the head and neck were moving under a carapace. When the head was pointing out to sea it rose up, putting a long wedge-shaped fish-like tail out of the water over the dry shore, parallel to myself, and not more than five feet from me, not touching the sand, but elevated. I could have stood under the “ flukes of its tail.”

‘ The only part of the body that had marks like joints (like in size and shape to a common brick) was also on the dry shore, but *resting* on the sand ; the great dome-shaped carapace, dull slate-grey, was standing quite five feet high, and so hid its long neck and head from my view, which before it rose I could see as a long shadow on the water. The carapace was smooth and without marks of any sort. The fish-like part of the tail was as glossy and shiny as the head and neck, but of a beautiful silver-grey, shading to white, with either markings or large scales, each bordered with a ridge of white, but if scales, not like those of a fish in position, as the fishes’ scales lie horizontally, while the Moha’s, if scales, lie perpendicularly, each the size of a man’s thumbnail. It had a thick fleshy fin near the end, about three feet from the flukes, and, like them, chocolate-brown. The flukes were semi-transparent ; I could see the sun shining through

¹ Quality and price not stated.

them, showing all the bones¹ very forked. One of the girls² asked me if a shark had bitten a piece out of its tail,³ and the other wanted to know if I thought it was an alligator ! The fish-like part was quite twelve feet long.

' All the time the animal was on shore it was perfectly motionless ; at last it gave a curious half-twist to the fluke part of its tail, the movement only just reaching beyond the fleshy fin, and, without disturbing the water in the slightest degree,⁴ vanished. I seemed only to have taken one breath when I saw its tail out of the water about the place where the steamer anchors, sending a quantity of fish into the air. I then saw it give a twist of its tail, and it disappeared altogether. The black boy saw it on shore the previous Monday, the 9th inst.'⁵

' As I was so close to it for at least half an hour, I was able to study its shape and colouring. In moving about, head and tail were seen alternately above water, but not even the shadow of its great body, and, from the length of that, a spectator could not guess that the head and tail belonged to the same creature, particularly as the colouring is so different. The parts I did not see were the legs. I stooped down and tried, but in vain, to see them, though the Moha was standing in only a foot of water, but the Black described them as being like an alligator.* . . . '

¹ Presumably, bony rays, as in a fish's tail.

² She had two with her, Jemima and Jessie Alsbury.

³ Savile-Kent was inclined to accept this suggestion.

⁴ This is not meant, I imagine, to be taken absolutely literally.

⁵ June 9th, 1890. The month is nowhere stated by Miss Lovell, but the 9th did not fall on a Monday in any other month of 1890.

* There are no alligators in Australia, although two species of crocodile (*C. Porosus* and *C. Johnstoni*) are found in the northern regions. No doubt the meaning here is : ' . . . described them as being (what I should call) like those of an alligator.'

Savile-Kent continues :

' . . . In reply to the author's application to Miss Lovell for the fullest information and, if possible, corroborative testimony concerning the appearance of this remarkable creature, he was furnished with the foregoing account ; and, in addition, with a document setting forth that it had been seen by seven¹ white people and a black youth either on the same occasion,* or within a few days interval of the time that Miss Lovell saw and sketched it on the beach. The signed testimony is as follows :

' " We, the undersigned, saw the Moha-Moha (as described by Miss Lovell) making for the shore of Sandy Cape on June 8th, 1890 :

James Alsbury, 1st. assistant, Sandy Cape
Lighthouse.

William H. Lees, 3rd. assistant, Sandy Cape
Lighthouse.

Mrs. Lees.

Donald Henderson.

Jemima Alsbury	} daughters of James
Jessie Alsbury	

' Robert, the black boy, sets his " mark " against it, it having been seen by him on the shore on the previous Monday. The two girls, Jemima and Jessie Alsbury and the black boy were present on the shore, having gone down there previously, when Miss Lovell interviewed (*sic*) the monster, the former, as mentioned in the narrative, addressing to her a pertinent question concerning the contour of the creature's tail. . . .'

¹ Actually, six.

* Obviously it was some days earlier. The document is dated June 8th. Miss L. says ' the black boy saw it . . . the previous Monday, the 9th.' She must have seen it about the 11th - 15th.

Such is the story of the Moha Moha. I have not succeeded in finding any further accounts of its appearing either on the Queensland coast or on the Barrier Reef itself.

Miss Lovell seems to have had an almost unique experience, and to have done her best to describe it in detail – perhaps a little too much detail. Had she been less explicit – had she said, for example, that her monster *looked* as if it were half fish, half tortoise, and not that it definitely *was* so – she would have afforded less ground for cavil. But I cannot think that, whatever her deductions, she was much mistaken in what she actually observed – nor do I think that her report was quite fairly treated, in scientific or quasi-scientific circles, on its original appearance.

CH. VIII. 1893 : DR. MATHESON AND CAPTAIN CRINGLE

IN this chapter I propose to discuss two appearances observed in 1893 ; one in the Kyle of Loch Alsh, N.B., and the other off the west coast of Africa. The raw material of both accounts has been obtained from an article, 'The Sea-Serpent,' by Alfred T. Story, which appeared in the *Strand Magazine* for August, 1895 : but, as will appear, I have supplemented this in both cases by further enquiries.

Dr. Matheson's sea-monster.

In September 1893, a sea-serpent again¹ appeared in Loch Alsh, the narrow strait dividing the Isle of Skye from the mainland. The event was witnessed by Dr. Farquhar Matheson, of London ; who, with his wife, was sailing on Loch Alsh in a small boat. The weather was fine, but the wind gusty, and there was some sea running. Here is Dr. Matheson's description of the encounter :

'It was a beautiful day, clear as possible, the sun shining brightly, and without clouds. The time was between one and two.

'Our sail was up and we were going gaily along, when suddenly I saw something rise out of the Loch in front of us — a long, straight, neck-like thing as tall as my mast. I could not think what it was at first. I fancied it might be something on land, and directed my wife's

¹ See p. 141 *et seq.* for an account of the creature seen hereabouts in 1872.

attention to it. I said, "Do you see that?" She said she did, and asked what it could be, and was rather scared. It was then 200 yds. away, and was moving towards us.

'Then it began to draw its neck down, and I saw clearly that it was a large sea-monster — of the saurian type, I should think. It was brown in colour, shining, and with a sort of ruffle at the junction of the head and neck. I can think of nothing to which to compare it so well as the head and neck of the giraffe, only the neck was much longer, and the head was not set upon the neck like that of a giraffe; that is, it was not so much at right-angles to it as a continuation of it in the same line. It moved its head from side to side, and I saw the reflection of the light from its wet skin.'

The creature had no visible scales, its skin appearing perfectly smooth. It was in sight for about two minutes, and then sank — subsequently appearing three times more, at intervals of two or three minutes. As it had done originally, it raised its head and neck perpendicularly out of the water, and appeared to be looking round.

'When it appeared the second time, it was going from us, and was travelling at a great rate. It was going in the direction of the northern outlet¹ of the Loch, and we were sailing in its wake; I was interested, and followed it. From its first to its last appearance we travelled a mile, and the last time we saw it it was about a mile away.

' . . . I saw no body — only a ripple of water where the line of the body should be. I should judge, however, that there must have been a large base of body

¹ *I.e.* The Kyle of Loch Alsh. See Fig. 13.

to support such a neck. It was not a sea-serpent,¹ but a much larger and more substantial beast – something of the nature of a gigantic lizard, I should think. An eel could not lift up its body like that, nor could a snake.’

The possibility of an optical illusion being mooted, he remarks :

‘ . . . That is a common theory. But what I saw precludes all possibility of such an explanation. In the case of an optical illusion, what the eye sees becomes attenuated, and thus gradually disappears.’ But in the case of the creature I saw, it slowly descended into the water ; it reappeared the same way, gradually ascending. I saw it move its head from side to side, and I noticed the glistening of the light on its smooth, wet skin.’

Apparently, Dr. Matheson mentioned his strange experience to some of his friends, who received it so sceptically that he ceased to speak of it ; although he drew up a short account which he ‘ released ’ for publication two years later.² He died in 1905, and his wife in 1927.

When collecting material for this book, I communicated with his son, Dr. F. M. Matheson, who supplied me with some additional information which is

¹ Meaning, possibly, one of the well-known small sea-snakes, of which there are several species – none, however, inhabiting British waters. Or Dr. Matheson may have had the popular conception of a sea-serpent, founded on Pontoppidan, in mind.

² This is true of optical illusions in general ; but it is by no means true of hallucinations. However, I do not for a moment suggest that such could have been the explanation of what Dr. Matheson saw.

³ In the *Strand Magazine*.

reproduced here. After relating that his father was born at Kintail (on Loch Alsh) and practised in Soho Square, he continues :

‘ . . . We were only children at the time. But I well remember my Father & Mother telling us of it . . . but we rather made fun of it.

‘ It is only fair to say, however, that my Father was of a very fine, intellectual & even-balanced mind . . . one of the earliest specialists in disease of the Ear, Nose & Throat.

‘ I cannot quite recall all the particulars . . . but the occasion was one on which he and my Mother were sailing in a rowing boat from Dornie in Kintail, to a farm of Ardintoul, in Glenshiel & on Loch Alsh.¹ The day was gusty & the sea somewhat rough. One occasionally sees in those parts in such weather a whirlwind catching a spray of waves & carrying it up in a column in the air as it drives it along, & I only suggest that this might have been an explanation of a strange phenomenon, were it otherwise not true. But, on the contrary, both my Father & Mother were positive about it, declaring it to be distinct & raising its head & part of its neck & body well out of the water, 2 or 3 times I believe.’

I shall return, in a later chapter, to the elder Dr. Matheson’s very apposite deduction from his experience : namely, that the creature which he saw must, to support the neck which he observed, have had a comparatively ‘ large base of body.’ As the production of a disinterested and trained observer, his whole narrative is of great value.

As originally published, his account was illustrated by

¹ See Fig. 13.

a sketch (Plate V) of what he saw. I do not know on what authority, if any, it is based : but it is given here for the sake of completeness, and because several subsequent observers (see chapter xi) speak of it as exactly representing the creature seen by them.

S.S. Umfuli, Dec. 1893.

Three months later the s.s. *Umfuli* of the Natal Line, Captain R. J. Cringle, fell in with a similar creature. If it were not for the prejudice with which the subject is generally regarded, I should have been inclined to expect that her commander's report of the encounter would, alone, have decided the question of whether the creatures popularly termed 'sea-serpents' really exist. But it met with the usual fate — and so did its author. When, in January 1929, I first applied to Captain Cringle for some supplementary information about his experience (I had not then made his acquaintance) I received the following very natural reply :

'Jany. 24th, 1929.

'Dear Sir

'Re the matter of Sea Serpent.

'I have suffered so much ridicule on this that I must decline to have anything more to do with it.

'Whatever unbelief there is in such a monster's existence, I am certainly convinced that what I saw was a living creature capable of moving at the rate of ten knots. I chased it for twenty minutes at that speed & had got no nearer to it. I had at that time 23 years experience in Sail & Steam & was not likely to mistake what I saw.

Yours faithfully

'R. J. CRINGLE.'

'Dropped the chase as sun was setting.'



PLATE V. DR. MATHESON'S SEA-MONSTER

NOTE.—The authority for this drawing is uncertain (see p. 188).

From 'The Strand Magazine,' August, 1895

[Facing p. 188



This letter did not in the least surprise me. I know, personally, five naval officers who have all, at one time or another, seen what they considered to be a sea-serpent, and who, to avoid ridicule, have deliberately said nothing about it – a very prudent course to take. Apart from these, here is a statement very much in point, from a book of reminiscences¹ by the late Vice-Adml.² H. L. Fleet :

‘ At last we . . . returned to Bermuda. On the passage Moubray³ and I saw what we considered to be a sea-serpent, but decided to say nothing about it, having due regard to the scepticism of the British public. . . .’

Quite so. *Prophesy acceptable things unto us . . .*

In the *Umfuli*'s case, however, I was fortunately able to convince Captain Cringle that I had no intention of ridiculing his story ; but that I was anxious to put on record a version of it which should be as correct as possible. In consequence, he was good enough to go through the original account with me – and, while confirming it in all essentials, to make some slight amplifications and corrections. Subject to these modifications, here is his account as it was published in 1895.

On December 4th, 1893, about 5.30 p.m., the *Umfuli*, steaming southward at $10\frac{1}{2}$ knots on her way to the Cape of Good Hope, was in approximately lat. $21^{\circ} 40'$ N., long. $17^{\circ} 30'$ W.⁴ The sea was absolutely calm, without a ruffle or a catspaw on it.

On the starboard side of the ship, and about 400 yards

¹ *My Life and a Few Yarns* (London, 1922), p. 229.

² He was a Commander (in command of H.M.S. *Tartar*, N. America and W. Indies station) at the date (1892) of the incident.

³ Lieutenant E. H. Moubray, R.N., was the *Tartar*'s navigator.

⁴ About 30 miles 264° from Cape Corveiro, and roughly on the 100-fathom line.

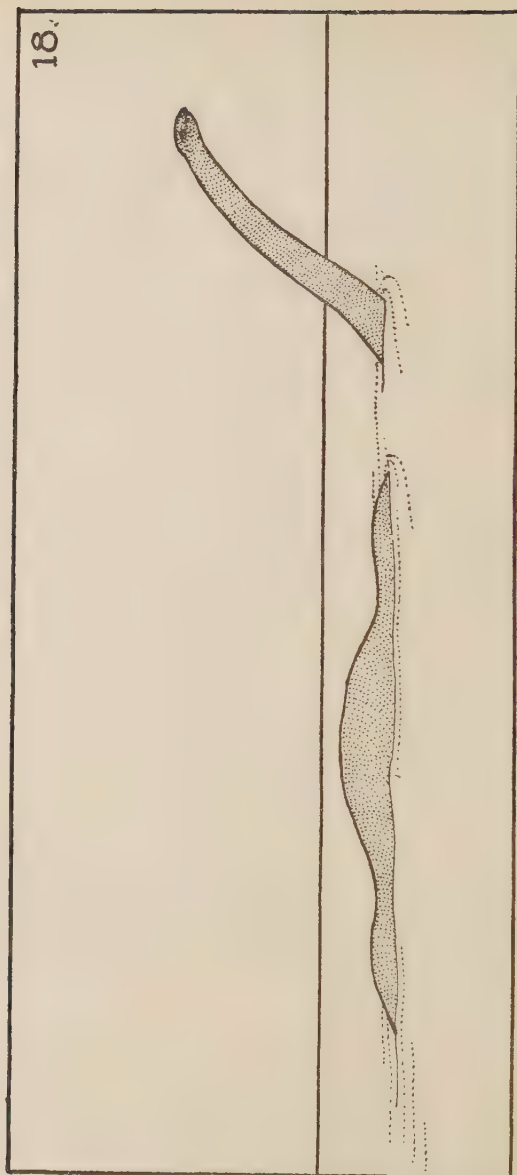


FIG. 18. THE 'UMFULI'S' SEA-SERPENT
Re-drawn from a sketch by Capt. R. J. Cringle

away,¹ there rose into sight a large creature, with a serpentine head and neck, moving rapidly through the water on an opposite course to the *Umfuli*'s. Its general appearance is shown in Fig. 18, which is from a sketch by Captain Cringle. The body, which exhibited three distinct humps, is described as looking like a hundred-ton gun partially submerged.

In Captain Cringle's original account, he remarks :

' It was rushing through the water at great speed, and was throwing water from its breast as a vessel throws water from her bows. I saw full 15 ft. of its head and neck on three several occasions. . . . The body was all the time visible. . . . The base, or body, from which the neck sprang, was much thicker than the neck itself, and I should not, therefore, call it a serpent. Had it been breezy enough to ruffle the water, or hazy, I should have had some doubt about the creature ; but the sea being so perfectly smooth, I had not the slightest doubt in my mind as to its being a sea-monster.

' I turned the ship round to get closer to it, and got much nearer than we were at first ; but the sun was then setting and the light gone, so that to have run the ship further off her course would have been folly . . . this thing, whatever it was, was in sight for over half an hour. In fact, we did not lose sight of it until darkness came on.'

The creature appeared to have a smooth skin, dark brown in colour. It dipped its head under water several times, sending the spray flying in all directions. Captain Cringle could see its eyes; and the jaws, which occasionally opened, appeared to be toothed.

¹ This is Captain Cringle's estimate : the log gives it as 500 yards.

The monster was seen by several of the *Umfuli*'s crew and passengers.¹ It is sad to relate that one of the latter, a Mr. Okell of Durban, had a camera on board – in these days of home-made cine-colour movies, it is difficult to realise that in 1893 a hand-camera was a comparative rarity – but he was so excited that he forgot all about it.

The following entry, describing this event, appears in the *Umfuli*'s log (see also Fig. 19). It is signed by her mate, Mr. C. A. W. Powell (now dead) who was on watch at the time.

Log of the S.S. Umfuli from London towards Natal

R.	K.	F.	COURSES.	WINDS	LEE-WAY.	Deviation.	REMARKS.
1	10	5	Light S.W.	S.W.			Monday Dec 14 1893 A.M.
2	10	5	"	"			2. Light wind & forecast.
3	10	5	"	"			
4	10	5	"	"			4. do do do
5	10	5	"	"			
6	10	5	"	"			Hands employed cleaning gunworks
7	10	5	"	"			rammings grain with & painting fore-cabin
8	10	5	"	"			Carpenter filling Engine Room Store
9	10	5	"	"			
10	10	5	"	"			2. Calm & clear.
11	10	5	"	"			
12	10	5	"	"			Pumps. wells carefully attended

Course	Dist	Lat	Long	Lat by Acc.	Lat by Obs.	Diff. Long	Long by Acc.	Long by Obs.
South	255°	32		Barometer. 30.20	22 38 54 N Symplocaster.	Thermometer. 78°	Aneroid	17.26.00 W

1	10	5	Calms					1. M
2	10	5	"					2. Calm & smooth sea
3	10	5	"					
4	10	5	"					4. Same weather Fl 43
5	10	5	"					
6	10	5	"					5. 2. Sighted and passed about 200 yds from ship a Mackerel-like of the Serpentine shape, about 80 ft long with slimy skin and short fins. It about 20 feet apart from the back and in air about the size of a full sized whale, I distinctly saw the fins with open & shut with my glasses. The jaw was exposed some about 1 foot long with large teeth in shape of a shark.
7	10	5	"					
8	10	5	"					
9	10	5	"					
10	10	5	"					
11	10	5	"					
12	10	5	"					

Just like a Conger Eel, *Acromiophis* seen on 14 Dec 1893. C. A. W. Powell. Mate

FIG. 19. PAGE FROM THE 'UMFULI'S' LOG

From the *Strand Magazine*, Vol. X.

¹ She was carrying about eighty passengers.

(Monday, Dec. 4th, 1893.)

' 2. Calm & smooth sea.

' 4. Same weather. PL 43.¹

' 5.30. Sighted and passed about 500 yards from ship a Monster Fish of the Serpent shape, about 80 ft. long with slimy skin and short fins at about 20 feet apart on the back and in cir. about the size dimension of a full sized whale. I distinctly saw the fish's mouth open & shut with my glasses. The jaw appeared to me about 7 feet long with large teeth. In shape it was just like a Conger Eel. ~~There were two of them in Company.~~

' C. A. W. POWELL.'

I imagine that Mr. Powell was, temporarily, under the impression that he saw two of the creatures together; and then, considering that he had been misled by spray or other appearances, erased that portion of his entry.

The news of the *Umfuli*'s adventure filtered into print some three weeks before she returned to England, and was sceptically received. As Captain Cringle remarks :

' I have been so ridiculed about the thing that I have many times wished that anybody else had seen that sea-monster rather than me. I have been told that it was a string of porpoises, that it was an island of seaweed, and I do not know what besides. But if an island of seaweed can travel at the rate of fourteen knots, or if a string of porpoises can stand 15 ft. out of the water, then I give in, and confess myself deceived. Such, however, could not be.'

¹ The reading of the patent-log at the end of the watch, indicating, approximately, the number of miles run since noon.

As already remarked, I cannot help regarding this encounter, alone, as affording proof of the existence of some sea-creature about the size of a common whale, but having a very long and slender neck – something, in fact, on the lines of the supposedly-extinct *Plesiosaurus*. I do not see how, granting the correctness of the reported facts – the observing conditions were good and the witnesses experienced and reliable – they can be explained on any other supposition. It is, however, much easier to pooh-pooh such stories than to explain them: and in this case it seems to have been the only course open to the sceptically-minded.

CH. IX. YACHT 'VALHALLA,' 1905

SINCE the *Dædalus* case of 1848, no reported appearance of a sea-serpent has excited so much public surprise as that witnessed from the yacht *Valhalla*, off Parahiba (Brazil), in 1905. It is safe to say that it is generally recognised, even by those who are profoundly sceptical of other sea-serpent stories, as a piece of evidence which cannot be disregarded – and yet which cannot be explained by supposing that any known creature was seen. It may be added that the *Valhalla* was engaged upon a cruise devoted to scientific research, and that her 'sea-monster' was observed by two very competent witnesses; one of whom was acting as the naturalist, and the other the entomologist, of the expedition. Both were Fellows of the Zoological Society.

In accordance with my plan of presenting the facts as far as possible from original documents, I subjoin, in the first place, the report on the subject which was presented to the Zoological Society (jointly) by the two witnesses – Mr. E. G. B. Meade-Waldo and the late Mr. M. J. Nicoll – and which was printed in the Society's *Proceedings* for 1906. It may be as well to remark that the *Valhalla* was a large auxiliary yacht, of 1,700 tons, capable of steaming ten to eleven knots, and of somewhat exceeding this speed under full sail.¹ She was owned by the late Earl of Crawford.² His state of health rendered it

¹ She is stated to have occasionally *logged* sixteen knots under all plain sail. I am a little dubious about her having actually reached such a speed.

² He was well known for his scientific tastes, particularly in the direction of astronomy. As Lord Lindsay, he equipped an expedition to Rodriguez

imperative that he should winter in a warm climate, and it was his practice to take a small party of friends for a long voyage, and to pass the time in scientific research. The cruise now in question was the third of these. The party consisted of Lord Crawford himself, the Hon. Walter Lindsay, Dr. A. Dean, Mr. M. J. Nicoll, and Mr. E. G. B. Meade-Waldo.

‘(From “Proceedings of the Zoological Society, 1906” – pp. 719, 721.)

‘ 7. Description of an unknown Animal seen at Sea off the Coast of Brazil. By E. G. B. Meade-Waldo, F.Z.S., and Michael J. Nicoll, F.Z.S.

(Received June 19, 1906)

(Text-figure 114)

‘ The following are accounts of a large marine animal (text fig. 114, p. 720)¹ seen off the coast of Brazil, copied from the journals made by us during our cruise in the Earl of Crawford’s yacht ‘The Valhalla’: –

“ On Dec. 7th, 1905, at 10.15 A.M., I was on the poop of the ‘Valhalla’ with Mr. Nicoll, when he drew my attention to an object in the sea about 100 yards from the yacht; he said: ‘Is that the fin of a great fish?’

“ I looked and immediately saw a large fin or frill sticking out of the water, dark seaweed-brown in colour, somewhat crinkled at the edge. It was apparently about 6 feet in length and projected from 18 inches to 2 feet from the water.

“ I got my field-glasses on to it (a powerful pair of Goerz Triëder), and almost as soon as I had them on

in 1874 to observe the transit of Venus of that year; and he also established a private observatory at Dun Echt, near Aberdeen, where (especially under Gill, its first director) much valuable work was done. He was President of the Royal Astronomical Society in 1878–9. He died in 1913.

¹ See Fig. 20, and also Frontispiece.

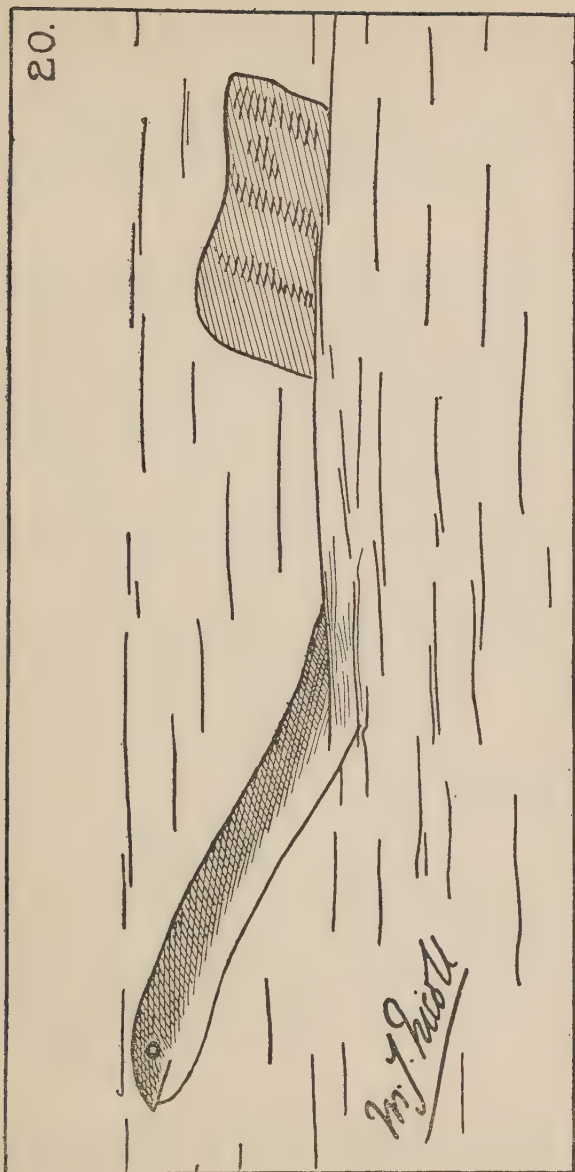


FIG. 20. THE 'VALHALLA'S' SEA-MONSTER
From *Proceedings of the Zoological Society*, 1906

the frill, a great head and neck rose out of the water in front of the frill ; the neck did not touch the frill in the water, but came out of the water in *front* of it, at a distance of certainly not less than 18 inches, probably more. The neck appeared about the thickness of a slight man's body, and from 7 to 8 feet was out of the water ; head and neck were all about the same thickness.

“ The head had a very turtle-like appearance, as had also the eye. I could see the line of the mouth, but we were sailing pretty fast, and quickly drew away from the object, which was going very slowly. It moved its head and neck from side to side in a peculiar manner : the colour of the head and neck was dark brown above, and whitish below – almost white, I think. When first seen it was about level with the poop of the yacht, and on the starboard side.

“ I made it out by the chart to be in about S. lat. $7^{\circ} 4'$, long. $34^{\circ} 20'$, but I think this is not quite correct. Mr. Nicoll got the correct position from the captain.¹ The depth of the water where we saw it was about 300 fathoms, but quickly went to as much as 1300 fathoms.

“ Since I saw the creature I consider on reflection that it was probably considerably larger than it appeared at first, as I proved that objects, the size with (*sic*) which I was well acquainted, appear very much smaller than they really are when seen on the ocean at a similar distance with nothing to compare them with.

E. G. B. MEADE-WALDO.”

¹ The correct position appears to have been $7^{\circ} 14' S.$, $34^{\circ} 25' W.$ This puts the ship about 23 miles 106° from C. Branco (near Parahiba, Brazil), and just outside the 100-fathom line. Two miles landward from this position, there is a charted sounding of 37 fathoms ; three miles seaward, one of 1,340 fathoms (Admiralty Chart No. 528).

For convenience, I insert here some further details with which Mr. Meade-Waldo has recently furnished me. The remainder of the account in the *Proceedings of the Zoological Society* will be found quoted in a longer narrative (given on pp. 201, 2) which Mr. Nicoll published two years later.

Mr. Meade-Waldo writes (27.1.29) :

' . . . I don't know that I have much to add to what has already been published . . . we were about 200 yards from the creature, which appeared on our starboard beam, going the same way as we were but more slowly. I got my field glasses on it at once. Nicoll who was with me had not got his. The colour was dark seaweed brown ; the frill at the back of the head and along the back crinkled at the edge. About 8ft. of neck was out of the water, and the under side was dirty white. It made a wave as it went along, and *under* water behind the neck I could see a good-sized body. As we drew ahead we could see it swing its neck from side to side and it lashed the sea into foam. 'The eye and the edge of the neck had a turtle-like appearance to us both. We were so astonished at the time that we could neither of us speak !¹ We then visited (late) Lord Crawford, and he said he would stop the yacht if it was any use ; but we decided as we were making about 14 knots it would not be much use.

' The creature seen from H.M.S. Daedalus . . . and figured in the " Illustrated London News " . . . might easily be the same. . . . '

¹ In a later letter to me, Mr. Meade-Waldo remarks : ' . . . I shall never forget poor Nicoll's face of amazement when we looked at each other after we had passed out of sight of it . . . '

And here is Mr. Nicoll's account, as given in his book, *Three Voyages of a Naturalist* :¹

(pp. 21-26)

' . . . Before describing our doings at Bahia, I must refer in detail to an important incident which occurred on the high seas during our second voyage thither.

' On the 7th December, 1905, when in latitude 7° 14' S., longitude 34° 25' W., and about fourteen miles from the coast of Brazil near Para, a creature of most extraordinary form and proportions was sighted by two of us. At the time we were under sail only, and were slowly making our way to Bahia.

' It was at about 10 o'clock in the morning, and I was leaning on the rail of the poop deck, when a large fin suddenly appeared close to the ship at a distance of about fifty yards. This fin resembled that of no fish I had previously seen, and I pointed it out immediately to Mr. E. G. B. Meade-Waldo, who was on deck with me at the time, and we watched it together for several minutes.

' As we passed slowly by, a long eel-like neck surmounted by a head, shaped somewhat like that of a turtle, rose out of the water in front of the fin. This creature remained in sight for a few minutes, but we soon drew ahead of it, and it became lost to view, owing to the ripple of the water. Owing to the fact that we were under sail at the time, it was not possible to go about and make a closer inspection,² and with

¹ *Three Voyages of a Naturalist* (London, Witherby & Co., 1908). To my surprise, I discovered that (in May 1930) there was no copy of this book in the British Museum Library – at least I could find none catalogued under any of the numerous variant spellings of the name 'Nicoll.'

² This, of course, is an over-statement. A sailing ship can always be put about – but it takes a little time. No doubt Mr. Nicoll meant that it was impossible to go about quickly enough to keep within close view of the creature.

great regret we had to be content with the view we had had of this remarkable monster.'

A full account of it was given at a meeting of the Zoological Society of London on June 19th, 1906, and I quote below from the report which was printed in the *Proceedings* of that Society. . . .

'At 10.15 A.M. on Thursday, December 7, 1905, when in lat. $7^{\circ} 14' S.$, long. $34^{\circ} 25' W.$, in a depth of from 322 to 1340 fathoms, Meade-Waldo and I saw a most extraordinary creature about 100 yards from the ship and moving in the same direction, but very much slower than we were going.

'At first, all that we could see was a dorsal fin about four feet long, sticking up about two feet from the water; this fin was of a brownish-black colour and much resembled a gigantic piece of ribbon seaweed. Below the water we could indistinctly see a very large brownish-black patch, but we could not make out the shape of the creature. Every now and then the fin entirely disappeared below the water.

'Suddenly an eel-like neck about six feet long, and of the thickness of a man's thigh, having a head shaped like that of a turtle, appeared in front of the fin. This head and neck, which were of the same colour above as the fin, but of a silvery-white below, lashed up the water with a curious wriggling movement. After this it was so far astern of us that we could make out nothing else.

'During the next fourteen hours we "went about" twice and at about 2 A.M. the following day (Dec. 8th) in lat. $7^{\circ} 19' S.$ long. $34^{\circ} 04' W.$,¹ the first and third mates, Mr. Simmonds and Mr. Harley, who were on

¹ No soundings have been made within several miles of this position, but the depth is probably 2,000 fathoms or so.

the bridge at the time, saw a great commotion in the water. At first they thought it was a rock awash about 100-150 yards away on the port side, just aft of the bridge, but they soon made out that it was something moving and going slightly faster than the ship, which at that time was doing about $8\frac{1}{2}$ knots. Mr. Simmonds hailed the deck, and one of the crew who was on the "look-out" saw it too.¹

'Although there was a bright moon at the time they couldn't make out anything of the creature itself, owing to the amount of wash it was making ; but they say that from the commotion in the water it looked as if a submarine was going along just below the surface. They both say most emphatically that it was not a whale, and that it was not blowing, nor have they ever seen anything like it before. After they had watched it for several minutes, it "sounded" off the port bow, and they saw no more of it.

MICHAEL J. NICOLL."'

'This creature was an example, I consider, of what has been so often reported, for want of a better name, as the "great sea-serpent." I feel sure, however, that it was not a reptile that we saw, but a mammal. It is, of course, impossible to be certain of this, but the general appearance of the creature, especially the soft, almost rubber-like fin, gave one this impression. It is often said that, if there were such a monster, remains of it would have been found long ago, but this is not necessarily so. Supposing the "sea-serpent" lives in deep holes, such as there were in the spot where we saw our "monster," then there would be little chance of remains being washed ashore, and the amount of deep-sea dredging that has yet been done is very small,

¹This incident is very typical of the vigilant watch kept by the average 'look-out man.'

so that it is not surprising that no parts of this creature have been obtained in that way.

'That it is not more often reported is not to be wondered at, when one realizes how often it is that a ship may sail for days together, without sighting another ship, even in seas where there is considerable traffic.'

'Also, it must be remembered that such ridicule is generally bestowed on the reports of sea-monsters that many persons hesitate to describe what they have seen. I know myself of several instances of unknown sea-monsters having been seen by reliable witnesses, who, to avoid the inevitable "chaff," would not publicly state their experiences.'

I have little to add to these remarks – valuable as those of a trained naturalist who had himself seen a 'sea-monster.' But I feel that I can scarcely omit the 'explanation' of the *Valhalla's* creature advanced – quite seriously – in a recent work.¹ Here it is :

'... One wonders whether this was possibly a sword-fish (which has a large square dorsal-fin) and whether the long neck was not the sword at the end of which was an impaled fish which was being macerated by violent wriggings in the water . . .'

I really do not feel equal to commenting on this theory.

¹ The German raider *Wolf* left Germany on November 30th, 1916, was absent for fourteen months (visiting the Indian Ocean and Australian waters, laying mine-fields and capturing several vessels), and returned unscathed to Germany. During the whole of this period, although our Navy and others were not exactly idle in searching for enemy craft, she was never challenged by an Allied man-of-war.

² *Nature Notes for Ocean Voyagers*, by Captain A. Carpenter, R.N., and Captain Sir David W. Barker, R.N.R. (London, 1926), p. 133.

CH. X. H.M.S.

'HILARY,' 1917

IT is significant of the small attention which reports of sea-serpents now attract, that although I had been collecting published notices of these for a good many years past I had never, until this year, heard of the singular occurrence which preceded the sinking of H.M. armed merchant cruiser *Hilary*¹ in May 1917. There are, however, mitigating circumstances to be pleaded. Such an event was not likely to attract much attention during the War ; and, although an account of it was published in 1920, it only saw the light in a 'Boys' Annual,' and was no doubt regarded as being merely an effort of imagination.

Such, however, was by no means the case. The facts, which I propose to give, are well authenticated ; as well, that is, as can be expected in the absence of the ship's log. She was torpedoed two days after she sighted her sea-monster ; and those who have served afloat will have no difficulty in understanding that, in the minds of many of her ship's company, the one event was a natural consequence of the other.

In Parliamentary Paper No. 200 of 1919, 'Naval Losses,' the *Hilary's* fate is recorded with a complete and natural absence of emotion, thus :

' ARMED MERCHANT CRUISERS.

(Name)	(Tonnage)	(Built)	(Sunk)	(Remarks)
'Hilary	6,329 (gross)	1908.	25 May [1917]	Sunk by submarine in Atlantic.'

¹ Formerly of the Booth Line.

Behind all such entries, if one could recover it, is a story of fine work well done, and ending tragically but gallantly ; but in this case there is, also, an element of the bizarre and grotesque. *Hilary's* commander, Captain F. W. Dean, R.N., subsequently wrote an excellent account of the occurrence, which appeared in *Herbert Strang's Annual*, 1920. Before giving it, I ought to mention that, with Captain Dean's consent, I have interpolated (in square brackets) one or two pieces of information which he has since supplied. Apart from these, and my notes, the account is now given exactly as originally written. It will be seen that the creature was passed at such close range that there could be little doubt as to its appearance and character.

' Many a good yarn could be told of the adventures of those whose privilege it was to serve in the armed merchant cruisers which, during the greater part of the war, maintained the blockade from the Scottish coast to the Arctic ice-line. With the title I have given to this one¹ I naturally do not expect it to be believed, though it is in fact true to the last detail, as many of those who were serving in the *Hilary* during her last few days above water can confirm.

' After a stormy winter we enjoyed some wonderfully fine weather during May 1917. On the morning of, I think, the 22nd the conditions were perfect – brilliant sunshine and not a cat's paw to ruffle the sea. Beyond the horizon to the northward the peaks of Iceland could be seen,² the only breaks in our all-round view of sea and sky.

¹ 'The Sea-Serpent Again : A Yarn of the North Sea Patrol,' by F. W. Dean (*Herbert Strang's Annual*, 1920).

² The *Hilary* was some seventy miles S.E. of the S.E. extremity of Iceland. I am not certain whether this distance is in nautical or statute

‘ It was about 9 a.m., and I was sitting at the writing-table in my cabin, which was immediately under the bridge, when a report was shouted down to me : “ Object on the starboard quarter.” In three seconds I was on the bridge, asking, “ Was it a periscope ? Where is it ? ”

“ “ No, not a periscope,” replied the officer of the watch. “ It looks more like a living thing, but it is not a whale,” and he pointed at an object which at first glance suggested to my mind a tree trunk with only the knobby ends (from which branches and roots had been cut) visible. A careful look through my glasses, however, made it clear that the thing was alive, and that the “ knobby ends ” were in fact its head and dorsal fin.

‘ We never missed a chance in those days to do a bit of anti-submarine practice, and it at once struck me that here was a good target ; so I turned to the 1st. lieutenant, Lieutenant-Commander Charles M. Wray R.N.R., and told him to get our three 6-pounder guns’ crews up, so that each one in turn should have a run. Like most of the armed merchant cruisers on that patrol, we had, in addition to our heavier guns, two 6-pounders placed one each side, just abaft the bridge, and part of our defence scheme was to have three guns’ crews, one of which was always on watch between these two guns, ready to close up instantly starboard or port, according to which side a submarine might be sighted. . . .

‘ Before taking the liberty of using the stranger as a target, however, I thought it would be a good thing

miles. In the weather conditions reported, however, Oraefajökull (6,947 feet), and possibly some of its neighbours, would certainly have been visible at a distance of seventy nautical (eighty-two statute) miles, and even more.

to have a closer look at it, so told Lieutenant Harris,¹ the navigator, to turn the ship round and head towards it. In due course we approached our object end on, and when we were about a cable from it, it quietly moved out of our way, and we passed it about thirty yards off on our starboard side, getting a very good view of it while doing so.

'The head was about the shape of, but somewhat larger than that of, a cow, though with no observable protrusions such as horns or ears, and was black, except for the front of the face, which could be clearly seen to have a strip of whitish flesh, very like a cow has, between its nostrils. As we passed, the head raised itself two or three times, apparently to get a good look at the ship. From the back of the head to the dorsal fin no part of the creature showed above water, but the top edge of the neck was just level with the surface, and its snake-like movements could be clearly seen. [It curved to almost a semi-circle as the creature moved its head round as if to follow us with its eyes.]

'The dorsal fin appeared like a black triangle, and when the creature was end on, this fin was seen to be very thin and apparently flabby, as the upper part turned over sometimes like the top of a terrier's ear when cocked. The fin was estimated to be about four feet high when in the position highest out of the water.

'I was anxious to get as good an estimate as possible of the length of the neck, *i.e.* the distance from the head to the fin, so asked the 1st. lieutenant, the navigator and the officer of the watch each to note, as I did, the length, and we compared with following results :

'1st. Lieutenant.—"The length of one of our boats" (28 ft.).

¹ Lieutenant Frederick C. P. Harris, R.N.R.

' Navigator.—“ Not less than fifteen feet.”

' Officer of Watch.—“ Length of one of our boats.”

' Myself.—“ Twenty feet.”

From which it may fairly be assumed that the true length of the neck was probably not less than twenty feet ; and, assuming that the dorsal fin would be just behind the junction of neck and body, the total length of the creature would be about 60 feet.

' The creature did not seem to be in the least alarmed by the presence of the ship, but continued to bask on the surface, now sinking down till only the tip of its nose and fin were visible, and anon rising again till the whole head and the fin to a height of four feet were above water.

' The ship was steaming at twelve knots all the time, so the creature was soon 1000 yards astern, and we then turned round, and I gave the order, when the range was approximately 1200 yards, for the first gun's crew to fire five rounds rapid.

' The gunlayer straddled his object [with the third and fourth rounds],¹ but his best shot was some twenty yards off being a hit, and the creature ignored the performance entirely.

' The second gun's crew were now closed up, the helm was put over, and the range opened again to about 1200 yards, and the five rounds rapid repeated. This time two shots seemed to fall very close to the object, but still quite failed to disturb its equanimity.

' The third gun's crew was now closed up, and on my order, “ Five rounds rapid,” the first shot fell very close to the creature, the second was a clean hit, and produced at once a furious commotion, which reminded me more than anything else of a bather lying

¹ *I.e.* one shot fell slightly beyond the creature, and the other slightly short of it.

on his back in smooth water and kicking out with all his force to splash the water, only of course the commotion on this occasion was on a vastly greater scale. It continued for perhaps three seconds, and then stopped, and we saw no more of the creature, though we passed close to the spot where it was last seen, so I gave orders for the ship to be put back on her patrol course, and left the bridge, telling the navigator to make a brief notation of the whole circumstance in the log.

'It was soon after 7 a.m. on the second (or maybe the third, I am not certain) day after this that brother Hun got us. A sitting shot we gave him, it being a bright, smooth morning, and the low sun right in our eyes. Our fires were extinguished at once, and when the ship had lost her way¹ and was steadily settling down, it became necessary to take to the boats. In due course our poor old ship went under ; the boats made for the land, which was fifty miles away, and during the afternoon all were picked up by a patrol drifter except one, which was found by a destroyer early next morning. I noticed when one of the boats came alongside the drifter that a little brown hand-bag was passed on board.

'A day or two later I was walking on the quarter-deck of the depot ship in the port where we were all landed, and was talking to Wray and Harris. I asked them if they knew who the little brown hand-bag belonged to, and was told that it belonged to D——,² who was officer of the watch at the time of the sea-serpent episode. This officer had been brought up at sea as

¹ This does not imply any reflection on the navigator ; it means 'when the *Hilary* had practically come to a standstill.'

² I have thought it best to omit the name of this officer (now dead), 'as not being sufficiently known by all to give point, but well enough remembered by some to give pain.'

a youngster by a captain who had an extensive knowledge of, and a firm belief in, many old sea superstitions, and apparently had adopted to some extent his old captain's views, for I was told that after I left the bridge he made a vehement appeal to Harris not to make the entry, in the log, which I had ordered. " "Nonsense," said Harris : "of course I must log the matter as the captain has ordered." And he did so.

" "Well," said D——, "that makes it a certainty anyhow – we shall never reach port again." And when he was relieved at the end of his watch, his first action was to go to his cabin and pack up his valuables ready for the coming event !

' Though some thirty-five years had elapsed between the time I first put on the blue uniform and this final disaster of my career, I had never up to that day heard that any bad luck was associated with the seeing of a sea-serpent. Now, however, if you ask me "Am I superstitious about seeing a sea-serpent?" I only reply, "Well, if ever I found myself again at sea in command of a ship, and anything of the sort was sighted, I should leave it alone and *make no entry in the log !*" '

I confess that, like Captain Dean, I had never before heard that it was held unlucky, by seamen, to sight a 'sea-serpent.' But it sounds very probable indeed. Sailors, as a class, are conservative and pessimistic ; they take a delight in dark forebodings ; like the Fat Boy, they itch to make one's flesh creep ; and anything unusual is generally hailed as a portentous omen, pregnant with mischief. It was this somewhat irritating trait – one of the hardy mariner's less pleasing peculiarities – which induced a Commander of my acquaintance to announce,

tersely and with emphasis, that any seaman or marine who should utter in his hearing the hackneyed formula "Well, we didn't do it that way last commission, Sir" should receive ten days '10 A.'¹

Whether avenging Fate (incarnate in the prosaic form of a prowling U-boat) sank the *Hilary*, may justifiably be doubted. It may be as well to point out that Captain Dean, in opening fire on his sea-monster, was complying strictly with the instructions laid down in the 'Admiralty Manual of Scientific Enquiry'²; in addition, it was war-time, and plenty of anti-submarine practice was undoubtedly necessary. I mention this, because I have no sympathy with wanton cruelty in any form, 'sporting' or otherwise.

As they may help to clear up one or two points in connection with the *Hilary's* creature, I subjoin extracts from letters which I exchanged with Captain Dean on the subject.

(R. T. G. to F. W. D.)

"... In making my selection of cases, my first principle has been to exclude all in which there is any possibility that what was seen could have been any known creature. Now I am sure, from your account, that what you saw was not open to this objection – but a confirmed sceptic might, unless headed off, take a different view. He might allege that what you saw was, in reality, a large basking-shark.

'I can speak from experience on this point, since I have a vivid recollection of seeing a huge one, some thirty feet and upwards in length, swimming lazily about in the Irish Channel – when I was serving in H.M.S.

¹ A form of punishment, now abolished.

² See p. 165.

Achates, just before the War.¹ We passed it as near as you did your creature ; it was swimming just flush with the surface, its large triangular back-fin showing, and was curving itself easily and gracefully as it swam. On the other hand, so close an approach left no doubt as to its being a shark ; and no doubt your observations left you in no doubt that your creature was *not* a shark.

‘ I gather that your creature did not lift its neck out of water. But could you say :

- ‘ 1. Was the neck clearly seen to be comparatively small in diameter along its length ?
- ‘ 2. What was its diameter, as compared with the head ?
- ‘ 3. Was there any indication of a junction of the neck with a larger body ?
- ‘ 4. Were any paddles or fins, other than the dorsal, seen ; or anything to indicate how the creature progressed ?
- ‘ 5. Was there any sign of a mane on the back ?
- ‘ 6. Were any teeth visible ?

‘ I subjoin a little sketch of a basking-shark, for comparison with yours, to illustrate the points at issue.’²

(*F. W. D. to R. T. G.*)

‘ . . . Your questions—

1. I was unable to see at all the shape or size of the neck, only that the top of it was just exactly awash all along and at times bent to almost a semi-circle.

¹ If our ship’s company regarded this encounter as a bad omen, they were not so far wrong. During the night (we sighted our shark just before sunset) news came that the hospital-ship *Maine* was ashore on Lockwood’s Island (Mull), and early next morning I had the doubtful pleasure of navigating the ship at thirty knots through the north end of Jura Sound.

² See Fig. 21.

2. See 1.
3. No, conditions were such that everything below surface was totally obscured.
4. No.
5. No.

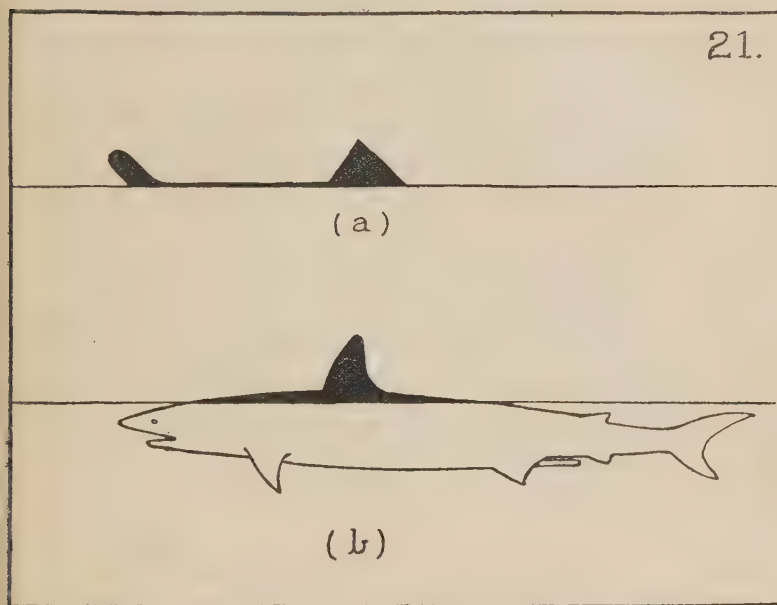


FIG. 21. CREATURE SEEN BY H.M.S. 'HILARY,' 1917

NOTE.—(a) is from a rough sketch by Capt. F. W. Dean, R.N.; (b) shows a suggested, but impossible, explanation of it.

6. No. The head was lifted once or twice as shewn in my rough sketch which you reproduce, the surface was of seal-like appearance, the pale flesh in front like a cow's nose was very noticeable but I was struck by the invisibility of mouth, eyes or ears.¹ . . .

*It was most certainly not a shark.*² Sorry my information is so negative.'

¹ See also p. 153.

² My italics.

Negative or not, one point seems clearly established – namely, that the creature was not a shark or a whale. Apart from Captain Dean's very decided statement on the point, neither of these could lift a comparatively small, seal-like head while keeping a long neck flush with the water – or curve the latter into a semi-circle.¹ And yet its computed length – sixty feet – precludes the supposition that it was a ribbon-fish ; and I do not think that the most hardened sceptic would seriously assert, like Owen, that it must have been a sea-elephant, or perhaps a school of porpoises. The only creature to which it bears any resemblance is that seen by the *Valhalla* : which, also, exhibited a dorsal fin rising some four feet out of water, and a long, snake-like neck. In both cases, there seems to be no doubt that the observers saw a single living sea-creature of unknown species.

¹ This recalls the extreme flexibility noted by the observers at Gloucester and Nahant a century earlier. See p. 40.

CH. XI. SOME POST-WAR REPORTS

IN concluding my budget of cases, I should like to put on record four reports which have come to my personal knowledge, and which have not, so far as I know, been published before. Their dates are respectively 1919, 1920, 1921, and 1923.

Island of Hoy, Orkneys, 1919.

Early this year I was shown, by an acquaintance, a copy of a letter describing a long-necked sea-creature which had been seen in the Pentland Firth in 1919. I got into touch with its writer, Mr. J. Mackintosh Bell, Writer to the Signet, of Roundstonefoot, Moffat ; and he has very kindly furnished me with the statement which I subjoin.

It will be noted that the creature seen by Mr. Bell appears to be much smaller than any of those described in former chapters, its total length being estimated at eighteen to twenty feet, and its weight at six tons or so. As in the case of the Moha Moha,¹ however, I consider that, as the creature is apparently unknown to science, and exhibits several features characteristic of most sea serpent reports, some account of it may well find a place in this book.

The following is Mr. Mackintosh Bell's account (slightly abbreviated) :

‘ In 1919 after demobilisation, I went as had been my custom for years to Brims Walls, Orkneys, to spend

¹ See chapter VII.

a month's holiday by taking my place as one of the crew in a cod-line fishing boat, belonging to fishermen friends. . . . The very first day I was there, I think it was about 5 August, I went afloat with a crew of four at about 9.30 a.m. for the purpose of firstly lifting lobster creels and then for cod fishing. On making our way to the creels, which had been set in a line between Brims Ness and Tor Ness, my friends said "We wonder if we will see that sea monster which we often see, and perhaps you will be able to tell us what it is."

'We got to the creels, hauled some, and were moving slowly with the motor to another, when my friends said very quietly "There he is."

'I looked, and sure enough about 25-30 yards from the boat a long neck as thick as an elephant's fore leg, all rough-looking like an elephant's hide, was sticking up. On top of this was the head which was much smaller in proportion, but of same colour. The head was like that of a dog, coming sharp to the nose. The eye was black and small, and the whiskers were black. The neck, I should say, stuck about 5-6 ft., possibly more, out of the water."

'The animal was very shy, and kept pushing its head up then pulling it down, but never going quite out of sight.¹ The body I could not then see. Then it disappeared, and I said "If it comes again I'll take a snapshot of it." Sure enough it did come and I took as I thought a snap of it, but on looking at the camera shutter, I found it had not closed owing to its being swollen, so I did not get a photo. I then said "I'll shoot it" (with my .303 rifle) but the skipper would not hear of it in case I wounded it, and it might attack us.

¹ This action is strongly suggestive of a seal; but no known seal has a neck of the proportions described by Mr. Mackintosh Bell.



FIG. 22. CREATURE SEEN OFF HOY, 1919
From a sketch by Mr. J. Mackintosh Bell, W.S.

‘It disappeared, and as was its custom swam close alongside the boat about 10 feet down. We all saw it plainly, my friends remarking that they had seen it many times swimming just the same way after it had shown itself on the surface. My friends told me that they had seen it the year before just about the same place. It was a common occurrence, so they said.

‘That year (1919) was the last of several years in which they saw it annually. It did not show itself again for two or three years, and then it was only seen once. As to its body, it was, seen below the water, dark brown, getting slightly lighter as it got to the outer edge, then at the edge appeared to be almost grey. It had two paddles or fins on its sides and two at its stern. My friends thought it would weigh 2 or 3 tons, some thinking 4 to 6. Not only my friends, but others, lobster fishing, got many chances of seeing it. . . .

‘I may say that since 1919 all cod and other deep-sea coarse fish have left the Pentland Firth. I think the reason is that such monsters frequent the rocky caves, which are always covered by deep water. My friends think the animal may have been killed by a passing steamer, but I think it is possibly a native of warmer seas, and that if we get a really hot summer it will be seen again.’

Mr. Mackintosh Bell also furnished me with two sketches of the creature (Figs. 22 and 23), and with a map showing approximately the spot where he and his companions saw it. The position is on the northern side of the Pentland Firth, approximately 1.6 miles north-westward of Tor Ness, the southern point of Hoy I., Orkneys, and about an eighth of a mile off shore, in some twenty fathoms.

In reply to an enquiry as to the creature’s approximate

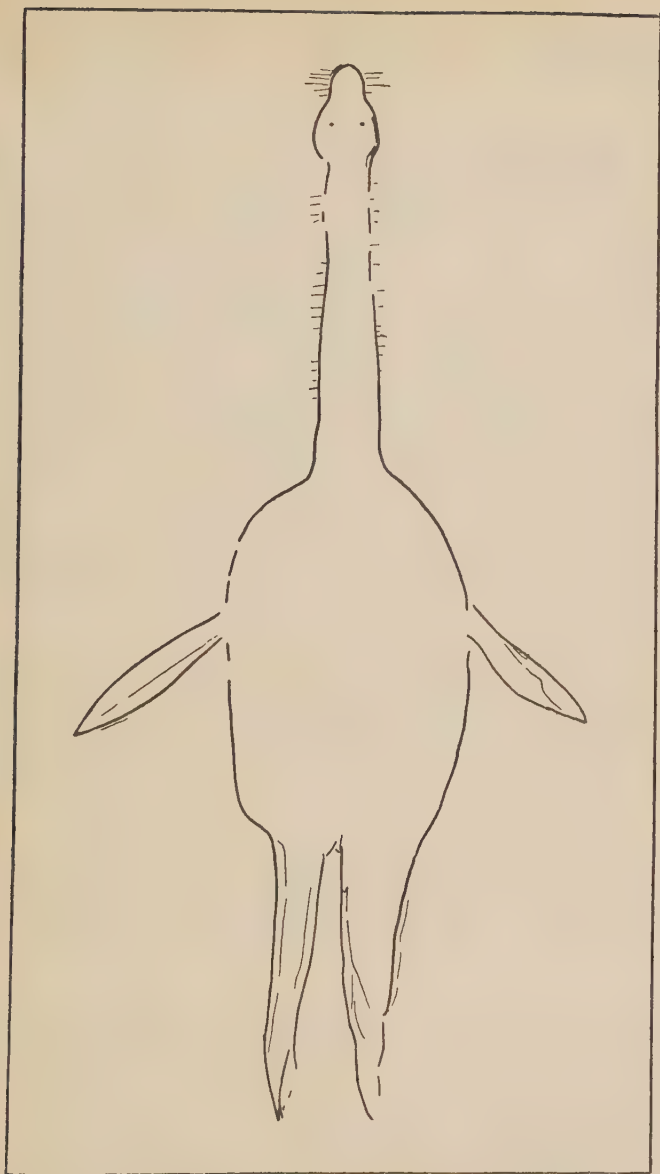


FIG. 23. THE HOY CREATURE, SEEN SWIMMING UNDER WATER
From a sketch by Mr. J. Mackintosh Bell, W.S.

dimensions, Mr. Mackintosh Bell subsequently wrote as follows :

‘ . . . Dimensions. *Neck*, so far as seen, say 6–7 feet. *Body* never seen when neck straight up, but just covered by the water. You could detect the paddles causing the water to ripple. When under water, swimming, the body, I think, to the end of the tail flappers would be about 12 ft. long – and, if the neck were stretched to say 8 ft., the neck and body 18–20 ft. long.¹ The skipper of the boat remarked that sometimes the top of the head, when seen from a boat vertically, was a bright red. *Neck* thickness say 1 foot diameter : *Head* very like a black retriever – say 6" long by 4" broad. Whiskers black and short. *Circumference* of body say 10–11 feet, but this I am not sure of, as I never saw all round it, but it would be 4–5 ft. across the back. . . .’

I may mention that, from a number of the figures illustrating this book, Mr. Mackintosh Bell selected Plate V (Dr. Matheson’s sea-monster) as most resembling what he saw. He remarks :

‘ . . . (it) depicts the animal we saw, very closely, but the head of ours was much smaller – more like a black or dark brown retriever, with small beady black eyes. . . .’

St. Paul Rocks, 1920.²

In July, 1929 – appropriately enough, at the beginning of the ‘silly season’ – I published an article on the

¹ Mr. Bell remarks, as to this estimate . . . “possibly that is extreme, 18 feet being, as far as I could judge, the length.”

² I have given the name of these rocks, as a sub-heading, to form a *point d’appui* for this account ; but they are actually distant some fifty miles from the position given, and are only a barren cluster of volcanic rocks, over 500 miles from S. America, the nearest mainland.

sea-serpent in the *Evening News*.¹ Its appearance brought me a certain amount of correspondence, including the following letter :

‘ . . . In 1920 I was Third Officer of the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company’s steamer “Tyne,” on a voyage from the U.K. to the Plate, and in April we left Casablanca for Rio de Janeiro.

‘ When in the latitude of St. Paul’s Rocks, I was standing on the deck about 3 o’clock one afternoon towards the end of April, when I saw on the starboard side what appeared to be a spar projecting from the sea : I drew the attention of the Second Officer, who was on watch, to the object, and he also observed what he first took to be a spar attached to wreckage. On watching it closely with binoculars, I saw that it was moving in the same direction as the ship, and about the same speed, and also that there was a moving head on top of what I knew was a long neck.

‘ It was clearly a creature of some description, and the head, like an umbrella handle, turned and looked at the ship, then the creature closed in towards us to a distance of about 400 yards. It kept speed with the ship, and appeared to be looking at us. For roughly five minutes it travelled parallel with us, then the neck curved over like a swan, and it dived out of sight.

‘ At the time I wondered what the body was like, there being considerable spray behind the neck, with flashes of dark body like a whale ; but I was not sure whether it was a long sinuous body like a snake, or round like a whale.

‘ As soon as I saw the illustration accompanying your

¹ The editorial department prefixed a little introduction of their own, which remarked, rather charmingly : ‘ . . . This is the Sea-Serpent season, and here Commander Gould, *who is quite serious about the matter*, quotes some of the evidences for the creature’s existence.’ (My italics.)

article,¹ I at once recognised the type of head : I told a number of people on my return of the occurrence, but, I think, was politely disbelieved ; while my suggestion that the event be entered in the Log was refused on the ground that we should have our wine bills stopped. Enclosed is a rough sketch of what I saw.

‘ Yours faithfully,

‘ THOMAS A. R. MUIR.’



FIG. 24. SEA-SERPENT SEEN FROM S.S. ‘TYNE,’ 1920

From a sketch by Mr. T. A. R. Muir.

I have reproduced Mr. Muir’s sketch as Fig. 24. On the original are typed some notes, as follows :

‘ Neck projected about 30 to 35 feet.

‘ Body appeared to extend back behind neck for about 50 to 60 feet, in very disturbed water.’

¹ Plate V. (Dr. Matheson’s sea-monster.)

'Swam at speed of 12 knots, for about five minutes, closing in on ship to 400 yards.'

'Turned head towards and away from ship a number of times.'

'April 1920. Position approx. Lat. $1^{\circ} 30'$ North ; Long. $28^{\circ} 0'$ West.'

Back Bay, Bombay, 1921.

Here is another specimen from my letter-bag. In this case, as will be seen, the writer himself regards his story as so intrinsically improbable that he asks for his name to be suppressed ; an attitude of mind which I deplore – but with which, I must say, I sympathise.

'While sailing a small boat in Back Bay, Bombay, at high tide, at midday in October 1921, I was amazed to see suddenly emerge from a calm sea, something very much like your illustration attached.¹

'The upright neck stood some 10 feet, I should say, perpendicularly from the sea surface, tapering very slightly towards the head. The diameter of this column appeared to be about 18 inches near the water. It seemed to be covered with large scales and, in colour, was a light olive green at the back, shading off to a dirty yellow in front. The head was like that of a gigantic tortoise, or turtle, but any body to correspond with that head and neck would be, at least, fifty feet long, I should judge.

'Being practically on the water line myself, I could see no sign of any body beneath the surface. The creature remained upright for possibly 30 seconds, swaying slightly, and then sank back beneath the sea. I was comparatively close, certainly not more than 150 yards away, and I do not mind admitting that I made for shore with all speed.

¹ Plate V., as reproduced in the *Evening News*.

'The amazing thing is, that the encounter took place not more than a mile from shore in an enclosed bay.'¹

Unfortunately, I was alone, and you can, of course, guess the nature of the remarks made on my narrating the incident.

'Should you refer to this at any time publicly, I should be obliged if you would suppress my name.

'Yours faithfully,

_____,'



25.

FIG 25. CREATURE SEEN FROM H.M.S. 'KELLETT,' 1923
From a sketch by Capt. F. E. B. Haselfoot, R.N.

Black Deep, 1923.

Finally, mention should be made of a curious creature seen by two officers of H.M. Surveying Ship *Kellett* in 1923, when carrying out surveying operations in the Black Deep, Thames Estuary.

I have obtained some particulars of this event from two

¹ Not, of course, totally land-locked. Back Bay is about three miles long by two miles wide.

of the *Kellett's* officers, Captain F. E. B. Haselfoot, R.N. (her captain) and Lt. Commander R. M. Southern, R.N., (her navigator). Unfortunately, neither of them took a detailed note of it at the time. I first learned of the event from Captain Haselfoot in 1927. Lt. Commander Southern recently furnished me with some further details.

According to his account, the time of day was about 9 a.m. It was in summer (he thinks, August), the weather calm and clear. He is not certain whether the sun was shining. He twice observed, rising out of the water, about 200 yards from the ship, a long, serpentine neck, projecting some six to seven feet above the surface. It remained up, in each case, for four or five seconds. Viewing it with the naked eye only, he did not perceive anything that could positively be said to be a head.

Captain Haselfoot, who saw it once, has furnished me with a rough sketch (Fig. 25) of the appearance, with which Lt. Commander Southern concurs (except as to the head, concerning which he is not positive). Captain Haselfoot estimated the head's height out of water as from eight to ten feet. The *Kellett* was working in the outer end of the Black Deep at the time, about ten miles off shore.

In a recent letter to me, Captain Haselfoot remarks :

“ . . . Black Deep was closed to navigation during the war, and at the time of the survey it was still closed, all the buoys being removed. In consequence no ship or vessel had been in this long reach for at least eight years : its waters were thus entirely secluded for the private activities of any sea-monster ! ”

CH. XII. WHAT BECOMES OF THE BODY ?

THE foregoing chapters contain a selection of the positive evidence which goes to prove the real existence of the so-called sea-serpent. As against this, however, there is at least one weighty, if negative, argument now to be considered.

It has often been urged, by those who deny, *a priori*, that sea-serpents do or can exist, that, in such case, their species must of course have been perpetuated by successive generation. A large number of the individuals must, therefore, have left their remains to bear witness, after their death, to the fact of their quondam existence. Yet no dead sea-serpents have ever been met with afloat ; none has been cast on shore ; and the coasts of the Atlantic – which is, by all accounts, their principal habitat – have never, although carefully searched, yielded a single vestige of their remains.

Before discussing this view in detail, it may be as well to traverse it generally. It rests on a single and incorrect assumption. There is no evidence tending to prove that such creatures would necessarily float after death – and upon this unproven assertion rests the whole negative argument.

Nor is this all. There is much to be said on the positive side. There is evidence which goes to show that other rare species exist (not only in the sea, but even on land) which have never come under scientific observation ; there is evidence to show that some types of living sea-creatures are known only by a single specimen, accidentally

stranded ; and there is evidence showing that, on one or possibly more occasions, carcasses have been washed ashore which can scarcely be identified with any known creature, and which exhibit marked affinity with the reports of sea-serpents.

In order to present the adverse case fairly, I will quote here the second portion of Owen's celebrated letter of 1848 upon the *Dædalus* case.¹ It constitutes a most clear and able attempt to do the impossible : namely, to prove a general negative.²

' . . . I am usually asked, after each endeavour to explain Captain M'Quhae's sea-serpent, " Why should there not be a great sea-serpent ? " — often, too, in a tone which seems to imply, " Do you think, then, there are not more marvels in the deep, than are dreamt of in your philosophy ? " And, freely conceding that point, I have felt bound to give a reason for scepticism as well as faith.

' If a gigantic sea-serpent actually exists, the species must, of course, have been perpetuated through successive generations, from its first creation and introduction in the seas of this planet. Conceive, then, the number of individuals that must have lived and died and have left their remains to attest the actuality of the species during the enormous lapse of time from its beginning, to the 6th of August last !³

' Now, a serpent, being an air-breathing animal with long vesicular and receptacular lungs, dives with an

¹ The first half of this letter will be found on pp. 110–115. Two connecting paragraphs — short, and of no particular importance — are omitted.

² Oddly enough, in an earlier portion of his letter Owen censures Captain M'Quhae for trying, so he asserts, to do the very same thing !

³ The date on which the *Dædalus*' sea-serpent was seen in 1848.

effort and commonly floats when dead ; and so would the sea-serpent, until decomposition or accident had opened the tough integument, and let out the imprisoned gases. Then it would sink, and, if in deep water, be seen no more until the sea rendered up its dead, after the lapse of the æons requisite for the yielding of its place to dry land — a change which has actually revealed to the present generation the old saurian monsters that were entombed at the bottom of the ocean of the secondary geological periods of our earth's history. During life the exigencies of the respiration of the great sea-serpent would always compel him frequently to the surface ; and when dead and swollen —

Prone on the flood, extended long and large

he would

Lay floating many a rood ; in bulk as huge,
As whom the fables name of monstrous size,
Titanian or Earth-born, that warr'd on Jove.¹

‘ Such a spectacle, demonstrative of the species if it existed, has not hitherto met the gaze of any of the countless voyagers who have traversed the seas in so many directions.²

‘ Considering, too, the tides and currents of the ocean, it seems still more reasonable to suppose that the dead sea-serpent would be occasionally cast on shore. However, I do not ask for the entire carcase. The structure of the back-bone of the serpent tribe is so peculiar, that a single vertebra would suffice to determine the existence of the hypothetical Ophidian ; and this will not

¹ *Paradise Lost*, book i., lines 195–8.

² Sam Weller, it will be remembered, held the same opinion respecting dead donkeys on land.

be deemed an unreasonable request, when it is remembered that the vertebræ are more numerous in serpents than in any other animals. Such large blanched and scattered bones on any sea-shore would be likely to attract even common curiosity ; yet there is no vertebræ of a serpent larger than the ordinary pythons and boas in any museum in Europe.

‘ Few sea-coasts have been more sedulously searched, or by more acute naturalists (witness the labours of Sars and Lovén), than those of Norway. Krakens and sea serpents ought to have been living and dying thereabouts from long before Pontoppidan’s time, to our day, if all tales were true ; yet have they never vouchsafed a single fragment of their skeleton to any Scandinavian collector ; while the other great denizens of the seas have been by no means so chary. No museums, in fact, are so rich in the skeletons, skulls, bones and teeth of the numerous kind of whales, cachalots, grampuses, walruses, sea unicorns, seals, &c., as those of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden ; but of any large marine nondescript or indeterminable monster they cannot show a trace.

‘ I have inquired repeatedly whether the natural history collections of Boston, Philadelphia, or other cities of the United States, might possess any unusually large ophidian vertebræ, or any of such peculiar form as to indicate some large and unknown marine animal ; but they have received no such specimens.

‘ The frequency with which the sea-serpent has been supposed to have appeared near the shores and harbours of the United States has led to its being specified as the “ American sea-serpent ” ; yet, out of the 200 vertebræ of every individual that should have lived and died in the Atlantic since the creation of the
Qs

species, not one has yet been picked up on the shores of America. The diminutive snake, less than a yard in length, "killed upon the sea-shore," apparently beaten to death, "by some labouring people of Cape Ann"¹ . . . (see the 8vo. pamphlet, 1817, Boston, page 38) and figured in the *Illustrated London News*, October 28, 1848, from the original American memoir, by no means satisfies the conditions of the problem. Neither do the *saccopharynx* of Mitchell, nor the *ophiognathus* of Harwood —the one $4\frac{1}{2}$ feet, the other 6 feet long : both are surpassed by some of the congers of our own coasts, and, like other muraenoid fishes and the known small sea snakes (*Hydrophis*) swim by undulatory* movements of the body.

' The fossil vertebræ and skull which were exhibited by Mr. Koch in New York and Boston as those of the great sea-serpent, and which are now in Berlin, belonged to different individuals of a species which I had previously proved to be an extinct whale ; a determination which has subsequently been confirmed by Professors Muller and Agassiz. Mr. Dixon, of Worthing, has discovered many fossil vertebræ in the Eocene tertiary clay at Bracklesham, which belong to a large species of an extinct genus of serpent (*Palæophis*), founded on similar vertebræ from the same formation in the Isle of Sheppey. The largest of these ancient British snakes was 20 feet in length ; but there is no evidence that they were marine.

' The Sea Saurians of the Secondary periods of geology have been replaced in the Tertiary and actual seas by marine Mammals. No remains of Cetacea have been found in Lias or Oolite, and no remains of Plesiosaur, or Ichthyosaur, or any other secondary reptile, have

¹ See p. 55.

been found in Eocene or later tertiary deposits, or recent, on the actual sea-shores, and that the old air-breathing saurians floated when they died has been shown¹ in the *Geological Transactions* (vol. v., second series, p. 512). The inference that may reasonably be drawn from no recent carcase or fragment of such having ever been discovered, is strengthened by the corresponding absence of any trace of their remains in the tertiary beds.*

'Now, on weighing the question, whether creatures meriting the name of "great sea serpent" do exist, or whether any of the gigantic marine saurians of the secondary deposits may have continued to live up to the present time, it seems to me less probable that no part of the carcase of such reptiles should have ever been discovered in a recent or unfossilized state, than that men should have been deceived by a cursory view of a partly submerged and rapidly moving animal, which might only be strange to themselves. In other words, I regard the negative evidence from the utter absence of any of the recent remains of great sea serpents, krakens, or Enaliosauria, as stronger against their actual existence than the positive statements which have hitherto weighed with the public mind in favour of their existence. A larger body of evidence from eye-witnesses might be got together in proof of ghosts² than of the sea-serpent.'

¹ This should have read 'has been suggested.' The reference is (naturally) to a paper by Owen, in which he advances a theory – based upon half-a-dozen separate suppositions – to explain why some (fossil) *Ichthyosauri* are, and some *Plesiosauri* are not, found with their tails partly dislocated. As a *demonstration*, of anything more than its author's complacency, it is of no value.

* This argument is unsound. See p. 272.

² This is not a book about the 'supernatural'; but I should like to draw attention to the fallacy of this remark. No amount of 'evidence from eye-witnesses' would prove the existence of ghosts – all that it could

So far Owen – dithyrambic, but cogent. To his contemporaries, his arguments may well have seemed unanswerable : many readers may still find them so – some of them, at least. For one of the hypotheses underlying them has long been abandoned.

I refer, of course, to the immutability of species. For Owen, there is no such thing as evolution, or even modification by environment. As a species was at its ‘first creation,’ so it must ever remain through the ‘lapse of the æons.’ Should a serpentine land-creature change its habitat for the sea (as the whales did long ago) it is inconceivable that it should become modified in even the smallest particular ; it must always have two hundred vertebræ ; it must always float high, and ‘dive with an effort,’ even in the element which is its new home ; it can never develop fins, or ampler girth, or even alter the structure or capacity of the ‘long, vesicular’ lungs which handicap it so seriously when seeking food below the surface.

This reads somewhat curiously, to-day. But Owen’s views are not merely old-fashioned ; they indicate a use of controversial methods more suitable to a barrister than a scientist. Note the play which he makes with the word ‘serpent.’ The witnesses whose statements, barrister-like, he accepts, twists, or poohpoohs as may best suit

prove would be that certain persons, in certain circumstances of place, time, etc. (often such as to induce a state of ‘expectant attention’), experienced certain impressions – visual, auditory, or as it may be. To my mind, ‘ghosts’ exist only in the mind of the person ‘seeing’ them – they have no independent existence outside of such minds – and the really interesting question is, What is the nature of the (often persistent) source which can produce a similar impression upon different and successive witnesses ?

I am aware that these remarks might be applied, *mutatis mutandis*, to reports of sea-serpents. But the cases are not parallel ; since, in the latter, there can be no doubt as to the independent physical existence of what is observed.

his purpose (which is to win his case, not to arrive at the truth) speak of what they saw as a 'serpent'; meaning, that it looked like one. Here is an opportunity not to be neglected. The serpents (with a few inconsiderable exceptions) are ill-adapted for life in water; and, if they died therein, their remains would probably be washed ashore. Consequently, by accepting the term 'serpent' in its literal meaning, the witnesses can easily be discredited. Nothing could be simpler – or less worthy of a great naturalist.

As a counterblast to that portion of Owen's letter which deals with the absence of sea-serpent remains, let me quote some remarks by Philip Henry Gosse, F.R.S., in his *Romance of Natural History*.¹ A chapter of this book, which first appeared in 1860, is devoted to a very careful and well-balanced examination of such evidence as was then available. Although hampering himself with one or two rather unnecessary restrictions as to what evidence he would accept,² Gosse went into the question very fully and fairly; reaching the conclusion that,

' . . . there exists some oceanic animal of immense proportions, which has not yet been received into the category of scientific zoology; and my strong opinion (is) that it possesses strong affinities with the fossil *Enaliosauria* of the lias.'

His theory as to the survival of some Enaliosaurian type – such as the plesiosaurus – is discussed in the

¹ *The Romance of Natural History*, by Philip Henry Gosse, F.R.S. (London, 1860). The chapter in question is the last in the book, and is entitled 'The Great Unknown.'

² He confined himself 'to *English* witnesses of known character and position, most of them being officers under the Crown . . .' (*loc. cit.*, pp. 344, 345).

following chapter. He employs it, as will be seen, in his remarks upon Owen ; but their critical value is independent of this theory.

‘ . . . Professor Owen presses also the absence of any recognised recent¹ remains of such animals. Let us test this evidence first by hypothesis, and then by actual fact.

‘ It may be that a true serpent, with large vesicular lungs, would float when dead, and be liable to be seen by navigators in that condition, or to be washed ashore, when its peculiar skeleton would be sure to attract notice. But, as I have before said, I do not by any means believe that the unknown creature is a *serpent* in the zoological sense. Would a *Plesiosaurus* float when dead ? I think not. It is supposed to have had affinities with the whales. Now, a whale sinks like lead as soon as the blubber is removed ; the surface-fat alone causes a whale to float.

‘ But we have no warrant for assuming that the *Plesiosaur* was encased in a thick blanket of blubber ; no geologist has suggested any such thing, and the long neck forbids it ; and if not, doubtless it would sink, and not float, when dead. Therefore the stranding of such a carcase, or the washing ashore of such a skeleton, would most probably be an extremely rare occurrence, even if the animal were as abundant as the sperm-whale ; but, on the supposition that the species itself is almost extinct, we ought not to expect such an incident, perhaps, in a thousand years. If we add to this the recollection, how small a portion of the border of the ocean is habitually viewed by persons

¹ One wonders what deductions Owen would have drawn from the *almost fresh* remains of a mylodon found in a cave at Last Hope Inlet, Patagonia, in 1897-8.

able to discriminate between the vertebræ of an *Enaliosaur* and those of a *Cetacean*, we shall not, I think, attach great importance to this objection.

‘The only region of the globe, in which the unknown monster is reputed to be in any sense common, is the coast of Norway. Now this, it is true, is fortunately within the ken of civilised and scientific man ; and, confessedly, no enormous ophidian or saurian carcasses have ever been recognised on that shore. But the shore of Norway is, perhaps, the least favourable in the world for such a *jetsam*. Such a thing as a sand or shingle beach is scarcely known ; the coast is almost exclusively what is called iron-bound ; the borders of the deeply indented fjords rise abruptly out of the sea, so that there is generally from fifty to three hundred fathoms’ depth of water within a boat’s length of the shore. How could a carcase or a skeleton be cast up here, even if it floated ?

‘But, secondly, as to facts. Is it true, that of all the larger oceanic animals we find the carcasses or skeletons cast up on the shore ? Is it true even of the *Cetacea*, whose blubber-covered bodies invariably ensure their floating,¹ and whose bones are so saturated with oil that they are but little heavier than water ?

‘In September, 1825, a cetacean was stranded on the French coast which was previously unknown to naturalists. It was so fortunate as to fall under the examination of so eminent a zoologist as De Blainville ; and hence its anatomy was well investigated. It has become celebrated as the Toothless Whale of Havre

¹ This is an over-statement. As any whaler can testify, a newly-killed whale will not float unless inflated with compressed air. After natural death, a whale first sinks ; then rises, when decomposition has advanced somewhat ; and finally explodes ! Hence the rarity of stranded carcasses.

(*Aodon Dalei*). Yet no other example of this species is on record;¹ and, but for this accident, a whale inhabiting the British Channel would be quite unrecognised.

‘Of another whale (*Diodon Sowerbyi**) likewise British, our entire knowledge rests on a single individual which was cast on shore on the Elgin coast, and was seen and described by the naturalist Sowerby.*

‘There is a species of sperm-whale (*Physeter tursio*) affirmed to be frequently seen about the Shetland islands; a vast creature of sixty feet in length, and readily distinguishable from all other *Cetacea* by its lofty dorsal, and, according to old Sibbald, by other remarkable peculiarities in its anatomy. Yet no specimen of this huge creature has fallen under modern scientific observation; and zoologists are not yet agreed among themselves, whether the High-finned Cachalot is a myth or a reality!†

‘M. Rafinesque Smaltz, a Sicilian naturalist, described a Cetacean which, he said, he had seen in the Mediterranean, possessing two dorsals. The character was so abnormal that his statement was not received‡; but the eminent zoologists attached to one of the French exploring expeditions – MM. Quoy and Gaimard – saw a school of cetacea around their ship in the South

¹ This is still the case: but it must be recorded that one or two authorities consider *Aodon Dalei* to have been merely an aged and toothless specimen of *Mesoplodon bidens*, which has very few teeth at any time.

* Mod. *Mesoplodon bidens*.

† Some twenty occurrences are now (1930) known; but this cetacean is still an exceedingly rare visitant to the British Islands.

‡ This question is still undecided.

§ I understand that the R.R.S. *William Scoresby* recently reported sighting a new species of dolphin, having two dorsal fins.

Pacific, having this extraordinary character — the supernumerary fin being placed on the back of the head. Here is the evidence of competent naturalists to the existence of a most remarkable whale, *no carcase of which, no skeleton, has ever been recognised.*

‘The last example I shall adduce is from my own experience. During my voyage to Jamaica, when in lat. 19° N., and long. from 46° to 48° W., the ship was surrounded for *seventeen continuous hours* with a troop of whales, of a species which is certainly undescribed. I had ample opportunity for examination, and found that it was a *Delphinorhynchus*, thirty feet in length, black above and white beneath, with the swimming paws white on the upper surface, and isolated by the surrounding black of the upper parts, — a very remarkable character. This could not have been the Toothless Whale of Havre ; and there is no other with which it can be confounded. *Here, then, is a whale of large size, occurring in great numbers in the North Atlantic, which on no other occasion has fallen under scientific observation.*¹

‘Are not these facts, then, sufficiently weighty to restrain us from rejecting so great an amount of testimony to the so-called sea-serpent, merely on the ground that its dead remains have not come under examination?’

Little need be added to Gosse’s remarks, which effectively undermine Owen’s main positions. As regards the established existence of rare animals, known only by a very few specimens, it may be pointed out that Bartlett, writing in 1877, notes that the (then) only known specimens of the two-horned, hairy-eared Indian rhinoceros

¹ In the light of later knowledge, it seems possible that this may have been the Lesser Rorqual (*Balænoptera rostrata*).

(*R. Lasiotis*) was accidentally captured at Chittagong, India, in 1868 ; in the heart of a district where collectors and naturalists had worked for years previously without even hearing of it. And who, thirty years ago, knew of the Okapi – another land animal ?

Despite the well-meant efforts of various Naval Conferences – which have added considerably to the gaiety and armaments of nations – there are at present about four hundred and fifty¹ submarines in existence. Yet, out of every thousand seafarers – I say nothing of landmen – I much doubt whether there are three who have seen a submarine. Should we conclude from this that reports of submarines originate in ‘a cursory view of a partly submerged and rapidly moving animal . . .’ as Owen puts it ? Had the nations always treated their submarines as they did originally – secluded them behind dockyard walls under conditions of strict secrecy, allowed no details or photographs of them to be published, and only permitted them to exercise at infrequent intervals – I imagine that anyone who claimed to have seen a submarine would have been told that no such craft existed, and that what he had seen must have been a whale : or, possibly, a sea-serpent.

I turn to the cases – admittedly rare, and generally suspect even then – of anomalous carcasses, claimed to be those of sea-serpents, which have been washed ashore or otherwise brought to notice.

¹ It may be held that this is an unfair argument, since no species could survive long in such small numbers. Actually, it is a mere analogy – still, it may be pointed out that the Gibraltar wild monkeys have numbered twenty or so for many years past ; that the last colony of the Great Auks, breeding unmolested on the Geirfuglaskeir (Iceland), numbered only a few hundreds when that islet sank in 1830 ; and that the similar community of *Rhytina gigas* (Steller’s sea-cow ; unknown to man until 1741, and extinct by 1775) at Bering Island is believed not to have numbered, at its maximum, more than 1,500 individuals.

The Animal of Stronsa.

The classic instance of such is the famous 'Animal of Stronsa,' which was stranded on the island of Stronsay,¹ Orkneys, in 1808. There can be little doubt that this creature was, actually, an enormous basking-shark, partly decomposed; but the original reports are so curious, and the accepted explanation so much at variance with them, that the case deserves more than a cursory mention, if only as an instance of how misleading it is possible for honest testimony to be.

It should be explained that the carcass was never examined by any person of education, and that the evidence relating to it, although given on oath, is that of the local fishermen and crofters. Similarly, the only extant drawing of it (Fig. 26) was made, by an amateur who had not seen the creature, from an exceedingly rough sketch supplied by one of the witnesses and amended according to his verbal description of it. Finally, it should be noted that the body was already half putrefied when found, and that many of the soft portions were missing.

Yet, on reading the depositions, one might be pardoned for thinking that the creature was, most undoubtedly, a modern plesiosaurus – or a specimen of Pontoppidan's sea-serpent, complete with mane. I subjoin a few extracts, premising that the originals² are very verbose, and rather irksome reading.

At Kirkwall, Nov. 10, 1808.

'In presence of Dr. ROBERT GROAT, Physician in Kirkwall, and MALCOLM LAING, Esq. ; M.P. Two of his Majesty's Justices of the Peace of the County of Orkney.

¹ Formerly written 'Stronsa.'

² Printed in *Memoirs of the Wernerian Natural History Society*, vol. i. 1808–10). Edinburgh, 1811 (pp. 431–441).

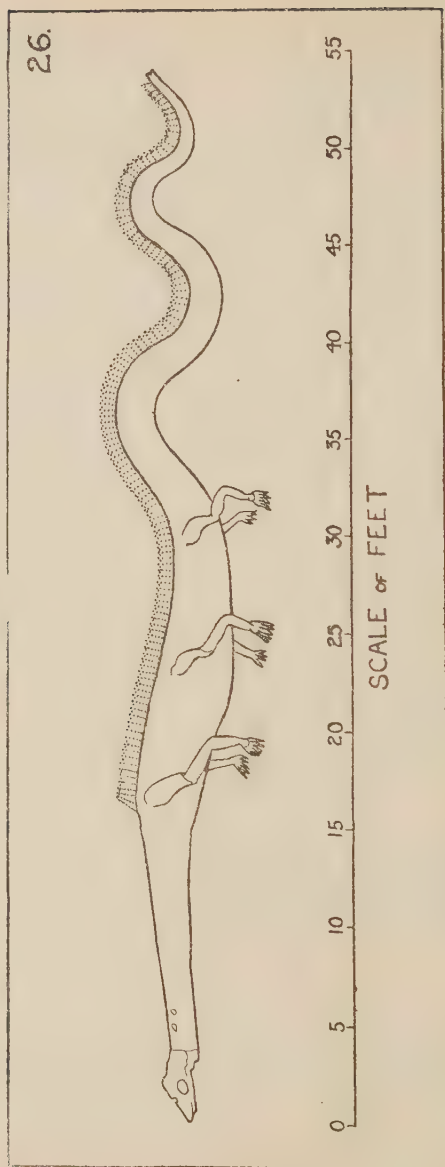


FIG. 26. THE ANIMAL OF STRONSA

Re-drawn (outline only) from the *Philosophical Transactions*, 1809

‘Compeared¹ JOHN PEACE, tenant in Dounatoun in Rothiesholm ; and being interrogated, solemnly declares, That on the 26th day of September last, he went a fishing off the east part of Rothiesholm-head, when he perceived, as he imagined, a dead whale, on some sunken rocks about a quarter of a mile from the Head :

‘That his attention was first directed to it by the sea-fowl screaming and flocking about it ; and on approach of it, in his boat, he found the middle part of it above the surface of the water : That he then observed it to be different from a whale, particularly in having fins or arms, one of which he raised with his boat-hook above the surface of the water : That this was one of the arms next the head, which was larger and broader than the others nearer the tail ; and at that time the fin or arm was edged all around, from the body to the extremity of the toes, with a row of bristles about ten inches long, some of which he pulled off and examined in the boat :

‘That about ten days afterwards, a gale of south-east wind came on, and the surge drove the fish ashore on Rothiesholm-head : That he measured it by fathoms, and found it . . . about fifty-four or fifty-five feet in length. . . .

‘. . . Compeared Mr. GEORGE SHERAR, tacksman² of Rothiesholm, in the island of Stronsa ; who being interrogated, solemnly declared, That on the 20th of October, being in Rothiesholm-head, he saw the crew of John Peace’s boat examining something on the water, which he took to be a dead whale :

‘That about ten days afterwards, a gale of east wind

¹ Appeared.

² Tenant-farmer.

having taken place, he went to see if the whale was driven ashore, and found it in a creek, lying on its back, about a foot under water ; and from the view which he had of its figure, length and limbs, his curiosity induced him to return a day or two after the gale had abated, when he found it thrown upon the beach, a little below high water mark, and lying on its belly, as represented in the drawing :

‘ That he returned next morning with a foot-rule, purposely to measure it, and found it to be exactly fifty-five feet in length, from the hole in the top of the skull (which he has brought to town with him), to the extremity of the tail : That the length of the neck was exactly fifteen feet, from the same hole to the beginning of the mane : That he measured also the circumference of the animal as accurately as he could, which was about ten feet, more or less ; and the whole body, where the limbs were attached to it, was about the same circumference : That the lower jaw or mouth was awanting ; but there were some substances or bones of the jaw remaining, when he first examined it, which are now away. . . .

‘ That the mane or bristles were about fourteen inches in length each. . . . That the upper part of the limbs, which answers to the shoulder-blade, was joined to the body like the shoulder-blade of a cow, forming a part of the side : That a part of the tail was awanting, being incidentally broken off at the extremity ; where the last joint of it was bare, was an inch and a half in breadth : That the bones were of a gristly nature, like those of a halibut, the back-bone excepted, which was the only solid bone in the body ; That the tail was quite flexible, turning in every direction, as he lifted it ; and he supposes the neck to have been equally so, from its appearance at the time. . . .

'... That a few days thereafter, a gale of wind came on, and drove it to another part of the shore, where it was broken to pieces by the surge, and when Mr. Petrie came out to take a drawing of it, no part of the body remained entire :

' That he endeavoured to convey an idea of the animal to Mr. Petrie, by drawing the figure of it as accurately as he could with chalk, on the table, exactly as it lay on the shore, after which Mr. Petrie made six or seven different sketches or plans of the fish, before he could bring it to correspond, in each minute particular, with the strong idea which he retains of its appearance : That he was the more attentive to its shape, dimensions and figure, in order to be able to give an accurate account of it to any travellers that might come to Rothiesholm ; and that he is ready to make oath, that the drawing is an exact resemblance of the fish, as it appeared when he measured it ; and corresponds in all particulars with the idea which he entertains of the figure, dimensions and proportions of the fish. . . .

' That . . . strong easterly wind had prevailed, before the body was discovered upon the shore, and that he saw the body on two or three different occasions, after he had measured it, and before it went to pieces. And all this he declares to be truth, &c.

' (Signed) GEO. SHERAR.'

Sherar's testimony was supported by two very similar affidavits, made by ' Thomas Fotheringhame, house-carpenter in Kirkwall,' and ' William Folsetter, tacksman of Whitehall.'¹ There were some discrepancies in their evidence — Fotheringhame put the neck at ten feet long or so, as against Sherar's fifteen : and the former

¹ He was not connected with the Inland Revenue Department, but held the farm of Whitehall on Stronsay Island.

also deposed to having 'examined the throat, which was too narrow to admit his hand, although,' Sherar states, '... the aperture of the throat appeared to be so wide, that he might have put his foot down through it.'¹ But in general, the accounts are in good agreement²; and a concise description of the creature, compiled from them, would have run somewhat as follows :

'Length about fifty-five feet. Maximum girth about twelve feet. Neck slender, and about fifteen feet long. Tail the same. Head small, not exceeding a foot in length and six inches in width. From the shoulders, a bristly mane extended to near the end of the tail. Skin smooth and grey. Organs of motion, three pairs of fins, one of which may have been a caudal fin.'

These statements, and the natural deduction from them – the existence of a new genus, for which the name *Halsydrus Pontoppidani* was suggested – were long accepted by many Scottish naturalists; such, however, was not the case south of the Border.

Little care seems to have been taken to preserve any portion of the carcase, but Malcolm Laing of Kirkwall, who was one of the J.P.s before whom the depositions were sworn, and who was the ground-landlord of

¹ One J. C. Howden, of Musselburgh, writing on this subject to the *Zoologist* (1849, p. 2396), remarked '... as there is nothing to prove that Thomas Fotheringhame's hand was larger than George Sherar's foot, we are led to the conclusion that one or other had made a mistake in his calculation.' Actually, the putrid state of the body explains the discrepancy – the lower jaw, it will be remembered, was absent.

² Except in the date of the event. Peace says he saw the body first on September 26th, 1808, and that it went ashore about October 6th. Sherar states that he saw Peace examining it on October 20th, and that it went ashore about October 30th. Everard Home, on no authority that I can discover, says that it was washed ashore on October 7th.

Rothiesholm, came into possession of a few specimens, preserved for his information by Sherar. These relics he transmitted (by request) to Sir Everard Home, of London.

Home was a celebrated surgeon, who built up a considerable reputation as an anatomist upon information filched from John Hunter's unpublished MSS.¹ (which last he subsequently burned to avoid detection). At the time when the strange carcase came ashore in Rothiesholm Bay, he was planning an elaborate memoir on the basking-shark ; and, having seen copies of the Kirkwall depositions in the hands of Sir Joseph Banks, he applied to Laing for the loan of his relics. These – part of the skull, several vertebræ, part of a pectoral fin, and some of the gill-cartilages – were accordingly forwarded to him ; and by their aid he at once identified the 'Animal of Stronsa' as a basking-shark, the *Squalus maximus* of Linnæus (mod. *Selache maxima*).

Accordingly, he added to his memoir² a note of the events at Rothiesholm and a detailed criticism of the depositions. These he treated in a rather off-hand style, remarking that the accuracy of the measurements was 'at least doubtful,' and giving it as his opinion that the creature's actual length must have been about thirty feet. This dogmatic rejection of inconvenient evidence – an excess of Pyrrhonism, since basking-sharks of sixty feet length are not unheard-of – went a long way to obscure the real worth of his paper. He gave a clear explanation of the facts, showing that the witnesses had honestly done their best to describe what they saw, but had overlooked that they were dealing with a mutilated and

¹ He was Hunter's brother-in-law and literary executor.

² 'An anatomical account of the *Squalus maximus* . . .' – *Philosophical Transactions* (1809), pp. 206–20.

putrefied body, not with a perfect one. Speaking of the drawing (Fig. 26) which he reproduced, he says¹ :

‘ It is deserving of remark, that there is no one structure represented in the drawing, which was not actually seen. The skeleton of the holders corresponds with the legs in the drawing, the margin of the dorsal fin in a putrid state with the mane ; so that the only errors are in the contortions towards the tail . . . and the number of the holders, which were mistaken for legs. . . . And when we recollect that the drawing was made from memory six weeks after the fish had been seen by those who describe it, during which interval it had been their principal subject of conversation, we may conclude that so extraordinary an object as the mutilated fish would appear, when believed to be a perfect one, would, in their different discourses, have every part exaggerated, and it is only remarkable that the depositions kept so close to the truth as they have done.’

The Edinburgh naturalists, probably and naturally irritated by Home’s *de haut en bas* style, joined issue as to this identification, and defended the anomalous nature of the ‘ Animal ’ with dogged pertinacity for many years. Thus, we find Dr. John Barclay, in 1811,² asking pathetically :

‘ Now what evidence had Mr. Home that this animal was a squalus, and even to suppose that it was a squalus maximus ? ’

to which, of course, the answer would have been³ ‘ The

¹ *Loc. cit.*, pp. 216, 217.

² *Memoirs of the Wernerian Society*, vol. i. (Edinburgh, 1811), p. 427.

³ Home did not answer this attack.

evidence afforded by its remains.' Dr. Hibbert wrote in 1822¹ :

'The existence of the sea-snake, a monster fifty-five feet long, is placed beyond a doubt, by the animal that was thrown on shore in Orkney. . . .'

And as late as 1854 Dr. T. S. Traill, who had spent some time in 1809 collecting information with regard to the celebrated 'Animal,' remarked, in a paper read to the Royal Society of Edinburgh² :

'Everything proves the Orkney animal to have been a chondropterygious³ fish, different from any described by naturalists . . . certainly, it cannot be confounded with any known shark ; nor does it belong to the family of Squalidæ.'

Unfortunately, there is no doubt that it does. The arguments put forward by Barclay, Traill, and others were largely founded upon false assumptions, or upon sheer ineptitude – for example, Barclay (and Traill after him) mistook the front of the skull for its base, and the cartilaginous nose-tip for the first cervical vertebra ! (See Plate VI.)

Professor Goodsir of Edinburgh, who examined the vertebræ in 1849 (the skull, by then, had apparently been lost) gave it as his decided opinion that they were those of a shark – and many anatomists since his time have confirmed this ascription. In a recent letter to me, Dr. James Ritchie⁴ of Edinburgh states :

¹ *Description of the Shetland Islands* (Edinburgh, 1822), p. 565, footnote.

² *Proceedings*, vol. iii., No. 44.

³ *I.e.* cartilaginous.

⁴ Keeper of the Natural History Department, Royal Scottish Museum.

‘As regards the identity of the animal of Stronsa, I should say that no competent zoologist, who examined the figures in the Wernerian Society’s Volume I of 1811, would have had any hesitation in saying that the representations . . . belonged to a cartilaginous fish. The remarks by Dr. Barclay on the remains . . . show a zoological incompetence so great that I am surprised that the Society published them.

‘Apart from this, we possess in the Museum, preserved in spirit, a series of three of the vertebrae of the “animal of Stronsa,” of 1808, and they are, as Mr. Home apparently suggested long ago, the vertebrae of the Basking Shark, *Selache maxima*.’

So much, then, for the ‘Animal of Stronsa’ – or, rather, the ‘Shark of Stronsa’; but I should like, in fairness, to give the concluding portion of Dr. Ritchie’s letter.

‘I fancy other records of Sea-serpents and other unlikely monsters could be reduced to nonsense, if portions were retained and examined, as in this case. Had you the opportunity of seeing the specimens, which are sent here for identification, supposed to be the remains, not of sea-serpents, but of as monstrous land animals, and which turn out to be very ordinary things after all, you would place very little faith in the casual observations, often in difficult conditions, of sea-men and others,¹ even when the observations were

¹ Surely this is a hard saying. Who the ‘others’ may be, I am uncertain; but seamen, as a class, are not particularly prone (I submit) to making ‘casual’ observations of matters within their experience. The phrase reminds one of the retired admiral who contemplated an action for general libel against the *Western Morning News*, this paper having stated, in connection with an absconding cashier, ‘. . . the prisoner was arrested in the company of several seamen, and other disreputable characters.’



PLATE VI. SKULL AND STERNUM OF THE 'ANIMAL OF STRONSA'

NOTE. Letter *h*, Fig. 1, indicates the cartilaginous nose-tip (see p. 247).

From 'Memoirs of the Wernerian Society,' vol. I.

[Facing p. 248



supported with affidavits. The sworn statements about the Stronsa animal . . . should be sufficient warning.'

I must say that I dissent from this opinion. *Ne sutor ultra crepidam* . . . is a sound adage, but it works both ways. Admittedly, the Orkney witnesses were found wanting when they attempted to give a detailed description of a partially decomposed carcase lying on the shore – that is the province of the zoologist ; but I have no doubt that if they had fallen in with the ' Animal of Stronsa ' alive and swimming freely in open water, they would immediately have recognised it for what it was. And I would go so far as to say that they could probably have given a more accurate description of its appearance, *in such circumstances*, than could the majority of land-faring zoologists.

In connection with this celebrated case, there is a final point to be noted. Soon after news of the Stronsa carcase had reached Edinburgh, rumours also began to arrive of an apparently similar creature which had been met with, somewhere among the inner Hebrides and not long before, by a Scottish minister named Maclean. The secretary of the Wernerian Natural History Society, which was then collecting all relevant information (and otherwise) with regard to the Stronsa creature, communicated with Mr. Maclean, and received the subjoined reply.¹ The passage of his letter respecting ' shining filaments ' (the alleged ' mane ' – really the decayed back-fin – of the Stronsa animal), shows that the Edinburgh enquirers naturally considered that his creature, seen alive in (as appeared) June 1808, was probably identical with the one washed ashore, dead, in October of the same year.

¹ *Memoirs of the Wernerian Society*, vol. i. (1811), pp. 442-444.

'Eigg¹ Island, 24th April, 1809.

'SIR,

'Your letter of the 1st instant I received, and would have written in answer thereto sooner, had I not thought it desirable to examine others relative to the animal of which you wish me to give a particular account.

'According to my best recollection, I saw it in June 1808, not on the coast of Eigg, but on that of Coll. Rowing along that coast, I observed, at about the distance of half a mile, an object to windward, which gradually excited astonishment.

'At first view, it appeared like a small rock. Knowing there was no rock in that situation, I fixed my eyes on it close. Then I saw it elevated considerably above the level of the sea, and after a slow movement, distinctly perceived one of its eyes.

'Alarmed at the unusual appearance and magnitude of the animal, I steered so as to be at no great distance from the shore. When nearly in a line betwixt it and the shore, the monster directing its head (which still continued above water) towards us, plunged violently under water. Certain that he was in chace of us, we plied hard to get ashore. Just as we leaped out on a rock, taking a station as high as we conveniently could, we saw it coming rapidly under water towards the stern of our boat. When within a few yards of the boat, finding the water shallow, it raised its monstrous head above water, and by a winding course got, with apparent difficulty, clear of the creek where our boat lay, and where the monster seemed in danger of being imbayed. It continued to move off, with its

¹ In the Inner Hebrides, between Skye and Coll. Close to it are two other singularly-named islands – Rum and Muck.

head above water, and with the wind, for about half a mile, before we lost sight of it.

‘ – Its head was rather broad, of a form somewhat oval. Its neck somewhat smaller. Its shoulders, if I can so term them, considerably broader, and thence it tapered towards the tail, which last it kept pretty low in the water, so that a view of it could not be taken so distinctly as I wished. It had no fin that I could perceive, and seemed to me to move progressively by undulation up and down. Its length I believed to be from 70 to 80 feet.

‘ When nearest to me, it did not raise its head wholly above water, so that the neck being under water, I could perceive no shining filaments thereon, if it had any. Its progressive motion under water I took to be rapid, from the shortness of the time it took to come up to the boat. When the head was above water, its motion was not near so quick ; and when the head was most elevated it appeared evidently to take a view of distant objects.

‘ About the time I saw it, it was seen about the Isle of Canna. The crews of thirteen fishing boats, I am told, were so much terrified at its appearance, that they in a body fled from it to the nearest creek. . . . On the passage from Rum to Canna, the crew of one boat saw it coming towards them, with the wind, and its head high above water . . . the monster offered them no molestation. – From those who saw it, I could get no interesting particulars additional to those above mentioned.

‘ I remain, Sir, &c.

‘ DONALD MACLEAN.’¹

¹ I have failed to find any further information about this minister – a fact not altogether surprising. Mull is the seat of the Maclean clan ; and the Inner Hebrides, at any given epoch, must (I should imagine) number Donald Macleans in their hundreds.

It will, I think, be conceded that, whatever Mr. Maclean's monster may have been, it was not a basking-shark. In fact, the combination of oval head, slenderer neck, and broad shoulders, tapering to a tail, bars the assumption that any known creature was seen. Were it not for the conclusive evidence afforded by the Stronsa vertebræ, there would certainly be some slight ground for supposing that the two creatures were the same – or of similar species ; as it is, one must regard the events off Coll and Rothiesholm as connected merely by the arm of coincidence.

Koch's 'Hydrarchos.'

In the case of the 'Animal of Stronsa,' there was no suspicion of fraud attaching to its discoverers. Their obvious honesty was admitted even by those who, like Home, questioned the accuracy of their reports. Such, however, was not the case with regard to the skeleton, alleged to be that of a gigantic fossil sea-serpent, constructed and exhibited by 'Dr.' Albert C. Koch in 1845.

Koch seems to have been a curious mixture of Hugh Miller and Barnum – a man who devoted a great deal of time, labour, and money to collecting fossil remains *in situ* : subsequently assembling them, either in ignorance or defiance of anatomy and palæontology, into fantastic monsters designed for public and remunerative exhibition. In 1842 and 1843 we find him at the Egyptian Hall, London, with his 'Missouri Leviathan,' an enormous skeleton built up from bones which Koch had discovered (or so he asserted) in Benton County, Missouri. It was composed of the assorted remains of several mastodons and elephants ; and, after serving its purpose as a side-show, was purchased by the British Museum – whose authorities, of course, were under no

illusions as to its composite character, and at once reduced it into its component parts. The type-skeleton of the American Mastodon, now at South Kensington, originally formed part of Koch's 'Missouri Leviathan.'

Encouraged by his success, Koch returned to America, and prospected far and wide for more material, which soon came to hand – or, rather, spade. Excavations in Alabama put him in possession of most of the vertebræ, and some other portions, of two specimens of *Zeuglodon*,¹ an extinct marine cetacean of great size. These he arranged in the form of a serpentine creature 114 feet long, for which he manufactured, from any spare bones that were handy, a corresponding skull, ribs and paddles. This masterpiece of synthesis he christened 'Hydrarchos² Sillimani' in honour (?) of Professor Benjamin Silliman, the eminent American naturalist; and he exhibited it in New York and Boston with, I believe, considerable profit to himself.

By this time, however, naturalists on both sides of the Atlantic had become definitely suspicious of Koch; or, at least, they had already concluded that while the separate remains he excavated were genuine, he was far from scrupulous in the use that he made of them. However loudly he might assert that he had dug up the vertebræ of his *Hydrarchos* in one spot, and in the very self-same order in which they were assembled for exhibition, no one of any standing could be found to believe this. He abandoned his intention of revisiting London with his latest prodigy, and *Hydrarchos Sillimani*, after undergoing strange vicissitudes and metamorphoses, found a last resting-place in Berlin, – correctly labelled *Zeuglodon*.

¹ Harlan's *Basilosaurus* (1824).

² A neologism, signifying 'monarch of the waters.'

The Coffin Bay carcase.

In strict chronological order, an account ought here to be given of the carcase washed ashore at New River, Florida, in 1885, which is still a zoological enigma. But it seems hard that it should be closely associated, even through pagination, with an obvious fraud like Koch's *Hydrarchos* ; and I propose, in order to get rid of all my pseudo-sea-serpents at once, to give some account here of a blunder, committed in 1891, which caused some amusement at the time.

On November 6th, 1891, *The Times* announced the death of the Bishop of Adelaide, the Right Rev. Dr. G. W. Kennion, D.D. ; a regrettable item of news which, however, was promptly denied by its subject.¹ Explanations followed. It appeared that the original report emanated from Dalziel's News-agency, who had received from an Australian agent the following obscure and gloomy cablegram :

' INFLUENZA EXTENSIVELY PREVALENT WALES VICTORIA
NUMEROUS DEATHS BISHOP ADELAIDE FOUND DEAD SEA
SERPENT SIXTY FEET COFFIN BAY.'

Slightly embarrassed by the absence of any punctuation in this morbid message, its recipients decided to delete, before transmitting it to *The Times*, the last six words ; making it end ' . . . Bishop Adelaide found dead.'

In a subsequent letter,² they explained their course of action thus :

' . . . We read the last six words as a separate sentence, and, judging that it was not suitable for *The Times*, we omitted it in the copy sent to you.

¹ See *The Times*, 9, xi. 1891.

² *The Times*, 11, xi. 1891.

‘ We can only now assume that the Bishop of Adelaide, or, possibly, a Mr. Bishop of Adelaide, found something in Coffin Bay which our correspondent describes as a dead sea-serpent.’

The *Saturday Review*, in a light-hearted article,¹ commented very pertinently on their behaviour :

‘ ... Taking their own account of the matter, one would have expected them to be rather surprised by the words “ found dead.” Bishops are not generally “ found dead,” but die — when they cannot help it — in a decorous manner, and in the presence of witnesses. And what on earth did they understand by “ the last six words ” taken separately ? Did they suppose that a sea-serpent had come within sixty feet of Coffin Bay, or had devastated sixty feet of the shore, or that a sea-serpent with sixty feet had invaded that cheerfully-named locality ? “ Sea-serpent sixty feet Coffin Bay ” seems, on the face of it, about as unintelligible a “ separate sentence ” as one could well imagine. And yet one cannot help admiring the discretion of those who “ judged ” that any mention of a sixty-footed sea-serpent, or a sea-serpent indefinitely connected with twenty yards, and with Coffin Bay, was “ not suitable for ” the austere dignity of the *Times*.’

I have not had much success in tracing further information about who found what in Coffin Bay ; but I understand that the Bishop discovered a carcass on the shore there, which he took to be a sea-serpent, and which proved, like the ‘ Animal of Stronsa,’ to have been a gigantic basking-shark.

¹ 14, xi. 1891.

The Florida carcase.

An event which occurred in 1885, however, is not so easily explicable. I take the following account of it from an article (which I have already had occasion to quote) by Mr. J. B. Holder.¹ I ought, I think, to remark that this article is temperately and carefully written, and is obviously the production of someone who weighs his words and writes from personal information. Here is the account.

‘ We now have to make the first record of the actual presence on our coast of a marine – probably saurian – creature of the nature of the so-called sea-serpent.

‘ The facts are as follows.

‘ In the spring of 1885 the Rev. Mr. Gordon of Milwaukee, President of the United States Humane Society, chanced to visit, in the course of his duties, a remote and obscure portion of the Atlantic shores of Florida.

‘ While lying at anchor in New River Inlet* the flukes of the anchor became foul with what proved to be a carcass of considerable length. Mr. Gordon quickly observed that it was a vertebrate, and at first thought it probably a cetacean. But, on examination, it was seen to have features more suggestive of the saurians. Its total length was forty-two feet. Its girth was six feet. The head was absent ; two flippers, or fore-limbs, were noticed, and a somewhat slender neck . . . six feet in length. The carcass was in a state of decomposition ; the abdomen was open, and the intestines protruded.

‘ The striking slenderness of the thorax as compared with the great length of body and tail very naturally suggested to Mr. Gordon, whose reading served him

¹ *Century Magazine*, vol. xlv. (New York, 1892).

* On the E. coast of Florida—approximately in 26° 03' N, 80° 05' W.

well, the form of some of the great saurians whose bones have so frequently been found in several localities along the Atlantic coast. No cetacean known to science has such a slender body and such a well-marked and slender neck. All indications were suggestive of the great *Enaliosauria*, and, appreciating the great importance of securing the entire carcass, Mr. Gordon had it hauled above high-water mark, and took all possible precautions to preserve the bones until they could be removed. Through his love of science, Mr. Gordon very kindly reported these facts, and our arrangements were most ample for the recovery and transport of the bones to New York. Most unfortunately their presence was all too short.

27.



FIG. 27. THE FLORIDA CARCASS

Re-drawn from the *Century Magazine*, vol. xlv.

‘ Mr. Gordon was impressed with the conviction that he had found the first flesh and frame of the hitherto elusive creature, which has been regarded as a tardy example of an extinct race. With no suitable implements at hand, he was obliged to trust its safe-keeping to the shore above tides. He counted without the possible treacherous hurricane ; the waters of the “Still-vexed Bermoothes,” envious of their own, recalled the strange waif. This was as unexpected as undesirable. The facts, however, remain.’

Fig. 27, showing the general appearance of this carcass, is taken from an illustration accompanying Mr. Holder’s

article. In the absence of further information (probably no longer procurable) it is difficult to appraise this report. At first sight, it would certainly seem that some unknown creature was discovered and examined ; but, in view of the decomposing nature of the remains, and the precedent of the Stronsa reports, it cannot be denied that a strong case could be made out for supposing this carcase, also, to have been that of a basking-shark. Such, however, is not my own opinion.

I have notes of one or two similar cases – notably one of a creature washed ashore at Santa Cruz, California, in 1926, ‘ thirty-seven feet long, with a long thin neck and a huge distended head ’ – but not in sufficient detail to present them here. Broadly speaking, it may be said that with one doubtful exception – the Florida carcase – no remains of a definitely and unequivocally ‘ sea-serpentine ’ character have yet been found. But I suggest that, in view of what has been put forward earlier in this chapter, the chances against such remains being washed ashore are so great that it would be unreasonable, now or hereafter, to expect such an event.

CH. XIII. THEORIES

v. FACTS

IN this chapter I should like to indicate the conclusions which, I suggest, arise out of an unbiased examination of the evidence contained in chapters I–XII.

It should be remembered that these cases, broadly speaking, form something less than ten per cent. of the material available – but, on the other hand, I readily admit that they constitute, in my judgment, the cream of the evidence. Those unbelievers who see in them no cause for abating their scepticism are not likely to alter this opinion on consulting the hundred-odd reports which, although I regard them as genuine, I have discarded as less valuable.

I propose to enumerate, in the first place, the various theories which have, from time to time, been advanced as explaining away such reports. I have tried to make the list as complete as possible ; *i.e.* I have not restricted it merely to the explanations suggested for the cases summarised in chapters I–XII. Classified, they are as follows :

A. *General theories.*

1. Deliberate deception.
2. Collective hallucination.

B. *Inanimate objects.*

3. Floating seaweed.
4. „ tree-trunks.

C. *Living oceanic creatures of known species.*

- (a) Swimming in line.

- 5. Porpoises.
- 6. Killer whales.
- (b) Seen singly.¹
 - 7. Rorqual.
 - 8. Sperm whale.
 - 9. Basking-shark.
 - 10. Tunny.
 - 11. Sea-elephant.
 - 12. Giant squid.
 - 13. Manatee.
 - 14. Sea-snake.
 - 15. Ribbon-fish.
- D. *Other living creatures of known species.*
 - 16. Black snake.
 - 17. Boa.
 - 18. Flight of birds.
- E. *Supposed gigantic examples of known species.*
 - 19. Giant sea-snake.
 - 20. „ conger.
 - 21. „ ribbon-fish.
 - 22. „ sturgeon.
 - 23. „ turtle.
 - 24. „ pinniped.
- F. *Supposed survivals of 'extinct' reptiles.*
 - 25. Ichthyosaurus.
 - 26. Elasmosaurus.
 - 27. Plesiosaurus.

And now, with a choice of at least twenty-seven theories, it will be well to take stock of the facts.

I propose to begin by rejecting, at once, the theories of deliberate deception, and of collective hallucination. There is, I submit, no case in this book which deserves

¹ In this section I have omitted one or two ludicrous suggestions, such as *Saccopharynx* and *Ophiognathus* (see Owen's remarks, p. 230), neither of which is as big as an average conger eel.

to be regarded, by any fair-minded person, as a deliberate hoax. Such a supposition involves more difficulties than it removes.

There is a little more to be said for the hypothesis of collective hallucination. Such things have occurred. Le Bon¹ cites the case of the French frigate *Belle Poule*, engaged in searching for a missing consort. In full daylight, the whole crew believed that they saw a raft and boats, crowded with men. A nearer approach disclosed that these were, in reality, some floating branches of trees.

But there is no real analogy between incidents such as this, and the cases here collected. One vital element of such delusions is almost entirely lacking ; a previously-induced state of 'expectant attention.' It is quite true that if you are eagerly on the look-out for something, and expect to see it, you are very likely to be misled by anything bearing even a faint resemblance to the thing which you expect to see ; and this illusion is facilitated by the presence of a crowd, whose comments and suggestions powerfully affect the imagination. Such was the case with the men of the *Belle Poule* — but such was not the case (if we except the crowds at Cape Ann and Nahant)² with the witnesses now in question. Hear M'Quhae, for example :

' . . . an actual living body, coolly and dispassionately contemplated. . . . I deny the existence of excitement, or the possibility of optical illusion. . . . '

Generally, none of the observers expected beforehand to see anything whatever of an unusual nature ; and, in

¹ Gustave Le Bon, *Psychologie des Foules* (Paris, 1895).

² See chapter II.

³ *The Times*, 21, xi. 1848.

the majority of cases, the witnesses were few in number. No less-favourable subjects for a collective hallucination could well be imagined.

Conceding, then, that there was some actual external foundation for the reports, and that the witnesses did their best to describe what they actually saw, we can (I suggest) also discard the assumptions that they saw floating seaweed, or dead trees. Whatever illusions such objects (seen a long way off) might originate, it is frankly impossible to suppose that they could, at the distance of a cable or so, not only pass unrecognised but give the impression of a living creature, moving rapidly through the water. To a seaman, such a suggestion is ludicrous.

For the same reason – the incongruity between the appearances and the suggested cause – we can also, I think, set aside the ‘flight of birds’ theory, and the very common suggestion that a school of porpoises, or killer whales, or small sharks, etc., swimming in line, had, in each case, produced the impression of a single creature. It is quite true that such a school, seen at a distance with the naked eye by an inexperienced observer, might perhaps at first produce that impression on his mind; but not for long. A nearer approach, or a glance through a telescope, would explain the illusion; and, after all, few seamen – whatever naturalists may think – are such born fools that they cannot tell a school of porpoises when they see one. This is a typical landsman’s theory. And how, on such a supposition, to explain the serpentine head and neck so often reported?

Our theories, then, are already somewhat reduced in number. Those classified as A and B (and no. 18 of class D) fall to be rejected, and the remainder all

postulate a common nucleus of fact—the presence of a single living creature. It remains, then, to compare the leading characteristics of the creatures reported to have been observed, with those of the creatures put forward as satisfying them.

I say 'creatures' in both instances; because, as already explained, I do not go so far as to assert that precisely the same type of creature was seen on every occasion. This seems an unwarrantable inference. The reports range from the eighteen-foot animal seen by Mr. Mackintosh Bell, and the thirty-foot Moha Moha, to the *Osborne's* 150-foot monster. But, reserving these exceptional instances for further remark, I suggest that, very roughly, it may be said that the remainder show (in essentials) a very considerable measure of agreement. There emerges a more or less consistent picture of a creature some sixty to ninety feet long. It has a long and slender neck, sometimes lifted out of water to a considerable height and terminating in a snake-like head. The body, which is probably much larger in girth than the neck, is propelled by four submerged flippers, or paddles, and tapers off to a slender tail. Neck and tail are exceedingly flexible, and the skin of the body, normally smooth in appearance, can be contracted into a series of large wrinkles or humps. The colouring is, in general, dark brown above and white below.

Such is, I suggest, a reasonable abstract of the reported appearances, in general. I do not propose here to discuss each case in detail; but it will, I think, be found, on comparing the foregoing outline with the particulars of each case, that the general agreement is close, and the discrepancies slight. Let us examine the remaining theories on this basis.

C. *Living oceanic creatures of known species.*

7. *Rorqual whale.* The rorqual is comparatively slender in form, of great length (sometimes exceeding 100 feet) and coloured black, or nearly so, above and yellowish below. On the other hand, it could not possibly exhibit a serpentine head and/or long slender neck.

8. *Sperm whale.* The same remarks, as to head and neck, apply even more forcibly. A sperm whale, swimming on the surface, looks like a submarine. Its head is relatively enormous, and it has nothing which could be called a neck at all.

9. *Basking-shark.* As already related, dead basking-sharks have, in more than one instance, been taken for sea-serpents. This, however, was after putrefaction had greatly changed their appearance. Normally, a basking-shark swimming on the surface would exhibit a large dorsal fin, and would otherwise much resemble a small whale. Here, also, the head and neck could not by any stretch of imagination be called serpentine. In outline, the body resembles a fat cigar.

10. *Tunny.* This is not so much a serious theory, as the reminiscence of a hoax.¹ The tunny's maximum length is about ten feet.

11. *Sea elephant.* This was Owen's 'explanation' of the *Dædalus* report,² and has already been discussed. It has never met with, or deserved, general or even limited acceptance.

12. *Giant squid.* As stated in chapters I and IV, this explanation has been advanced, ingeniously but unsuccessfully, to cover the Egede and *Dædalus* cases. Its originator, Lee, was confident that practically all reported sea-serpents could be accounted for in this manner – but that can scarcely be called an unbiased opinion. As

¹ See p. 58.

² See p. 113.

already shown, it fails in the cases to which he most confidently applied it ; it would be a waste of time to discuss it further in detail.

In fairness, I should add that I have little doubt that *some* reported sea-serpents were, actually, giant squid.¹

13. *Manatee*. Another valueless suggestion. The manatee (and its near relative, the dugong) resembles a seal in appearance, and does not exceed twelve feet in length. A larger type, Steller's Sea-cow, was as big as a male sea-elephant (say twenty feet long) but this has been extinct for over a century and a half ; and having a large head and short, thick neck it could not, in any event, satisfy the reports.

14. *Sea-snake*. The known sea-snakes (*Hydrophidiæ*) do not exceed a few feet in length, and a few inches in diameter. Incidentally, their range is confined to the Indian and Pacific oceans ; and, generally, to the tropics.² They are unknown in the Atlantic,³ from which the great majority of sea-serpents have been reported.

15. *Ribbon fish*. This theory, like No. 12 (giant squid), has, at first sight, a good deal to be said for it. It has often been advanced – notably by Dr. Andrew Wilson⁴ and (quite recently) by Sir J. A. Thompson.⁵

The ribbon fish (also called tape-fish and 'King of the Herring') is undoubtedly serpentine in form, and

¹ For instance, an appearance reported in the *Wide World Magazine* for March 1901 – and I almost think I should add the *Pauline* case of 1875, affidavits notwithstanding.

² The Indian Ocean is their principal habitat – but they are not unknown in Australia. See, for example, the *Sydney Morning Herald* of May 4th and June 6th, 1927.

³ I have only come across one (doubtful) report : a *Pelamys bicolor* seen from the ship *General Coole*, on August 1st, 1786, in lat. 42° 44' N., long. 23° 10' W.

⁴ *Leisure Time Studies* (London, 1879).

⁵ See the *Illustrated London News*, 19, ii. 1921.

carries a peculiar back-fin which might easily be mistaken for a mane. It is a deep-water creature, very rarely met with.

No known specimen, however, has exceeded twenty-five feet in length, although there are vague reports of forty-foot ones having been encountered. In view of its very slender body, it would be a mechanical impossibility for such a creature to swim with its head 'held constantly' more than a very few inches above water. In addition, its coloration resembles polished steel, or silver.

D. *Other living creatures of known species.*

16. *Black snake.* This theory, put forward by the Linnean Society of Boston in 1817, has already been discussed.¹ It is obviously untenable.

17. *Boa.* In view of the known fact that some of the large snakes, such as boas, are strong swimmers, it has sometimes been suggested that, if carried to sea by off-shore currents, or while coiled round floating trees or other wreckage, they might easily give rise to reports of sea-serpents.

There is a case on record² of a cedar-trunk which, accompanied by a large and living boa, was washed ashore at St. Vincent Island, West Indies, having presumably come from South America. But such accidents can scarcely be common, and the chances of such a snake surviving attacks by sharks, etc., are very small indeed. Moreover, to fit the facts we must assume that, when seen, it was swimming freely and unsupported; and then, while it might elevate its head and neck a few inches, the rest of its body would be in wide *horizontal* undulation.

¹ See p. 56.

² *Zoological Journal*, December 1827.

Apart from this, no known snake is nearly large enough to fill the bill as regards observed length and girth.

E. *Supposed gigantic examples of known species.*

Leaving the known creatures, amongst whom (I suggest) none can be found which adequately fills the bill, we turn to the theory, or group of theories, holding that gigantic variant forms of some such creatures, hitherto unknown to science, may exist—and that in this manner an explanation can be obtained.

It is unquestionably true that this is not, *a priori*, impossible. The case of the giant squid, already mentioned, affords ample proof of this. Here one has a small, quite normal sea-creature—the common squid, or loligo—suddenly found to possess exceedingly close relatives of enormous size; inhabiting the deep seas, very rarely seen, and, until quite recently, regarded as mythical.

On this assumption—

19. *Giant sea-snake.*

20. *Giant conger.*

21. *Giant ribbon-fish.*

I have grouped these theories together, because of one element which is common to all three. They all postulate the existence of a large sea-creature whose girth is practically uniform from head to tail. Such being the case, it is possible, from the reported facts, to arrive at an approximate conclusion as to the length of such a creature; and we reach the rather startling result that this must equal, if not exceed, that of an Atlantic liner.

The line of reasoning is as follows. I cannot hope to put it better than was done by R. A. Proctor.¹

‘A sea creature... whatever its nature, which keeps any

¹ In his ‘Strange Sea Creatures’ (*Pleasant Ways in Science*, pp. 216, 217).

considerable volume of its body out of water constantly, while travelling a long distance, must of necessity have a much greater volume all the time under water, and must have its propelling apparatus under water.

'Moreover, if the propulsion is not effected by fins, paddles, a great flat tail, or these combined, but by the undulations of the animal's own body, then the part out of water must of necessity be affected by these undulations, unless it is very small in volume and length compared with the part under water.

'I assert both these points as matters depending on

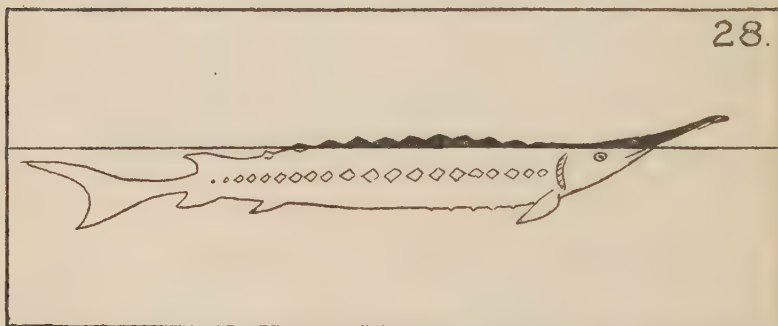


FIG. 28. THE 'GIANT STURGEON' THEORY

physical laws, and without fear that the best informed zoologist can adduce any instances to the contrary. It is in fact physically impossible¹ that any such cases should exist.'

It follows, that if such creatures as those seen (for example) from the *Dædalus* and *Umfuli* were gigantic sea-snakes, congers, or ribbon-fish they would be, at least, upwards of five hundred feet long. To those who

¹ At the same time, 'impossible' is a dangerous word to use. Lactantius declared that those who credited the existence of antipodes were mad, and St. Augustine added that, in any event, it was physically impossible for such territories to be inhabited.

are inclined to make such an assumption I have nothing to say, except that no creature could be better entitled to the discredited name of 'sea-serpent.'

22. *Giant Sturgeon*. I have not seen this theory suggested before. I put it forward, not as a serious hypothesis, but more or less as a parody upon the ingenious theories, with equally ingenious illustrations, evolved by Lee. As shown in Fig. 28, if we imagine a sturgeon a hundred feet or so in length, swimming with its snout and back above water, the curved snout and the scutes on the crest of the back may be thought to resemble the Gloucester monster quite nicely. But, as with all suggestions of the kind, this fits one case well: and, by reason of being *made* to fit it, fails lamentably to cover the remainder.

23. *Giant turtle*. The hypothesis of a giant turtle may be said to have some positive evidence in its favour. The case of the Moha Moha can scarcely be explained in any other manner. And the creature seen by the *Valhalla*, apart from the fin on its back, might also be regarded as an enormous long-necked turtle.¹ The body of the *Osborne's* monster, again, was 'in form like that of a gigantic turtle. . .'² Altogether, this seems a promising hypothesis – but it would not cover many of the remaining cases.

24. *Giant pinniped*. As in the last case, there is some positive evidence for this theory. The creature seen and sketched by Mr. Mackintosh Bell is, in essentials, a long-necked seal – of unknown type, it is true, but still

¹ Mr. Nicoll, however, (who saw it) considered – albeit somewhat dubiously – that its nature was mammalian. See p. 202.

² *The Times*, 14, vi. 1877.

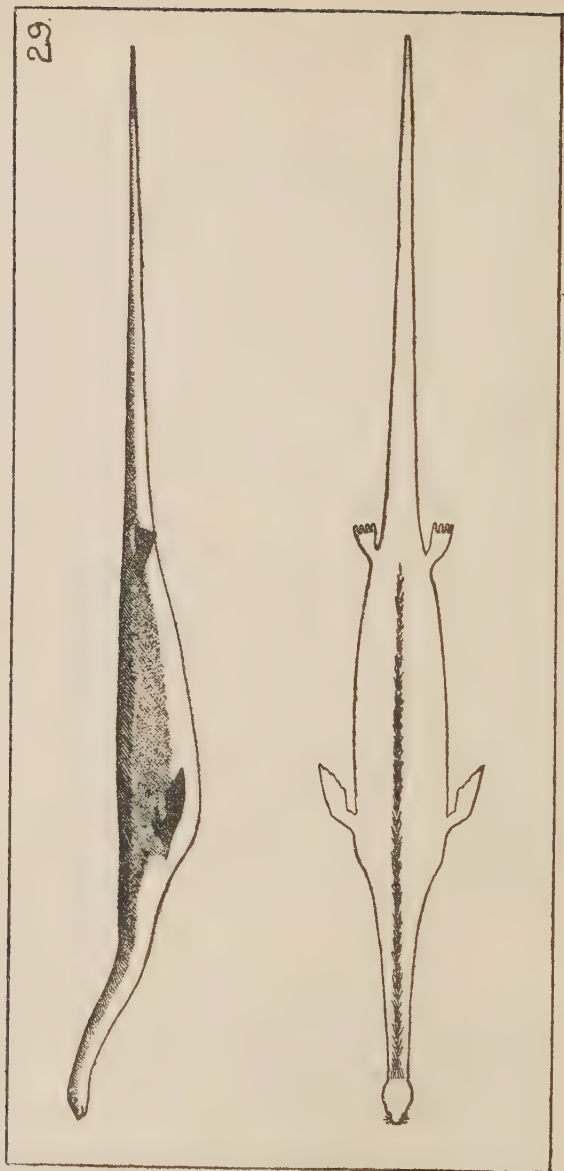


FIG. 29. OUDEMANS' HYPOTHETICAL PINNIPED
Copied from *The Great Sea-Serpent*

recognisably a seal. On the other hand, his creature was of comparatively small dimensions : and, as explained, I have included it as affording a valuable side-light on the remaining cases – not as being quite on all-fours with them.

Oudemans, as the result of his examination of some 160 reports (up to 1890) deduced therefrom the existence of a quite gigantic member of the Pinnipeds (the seal family). He worked his conclusions out in most elaborate detail, giving a table of presumed dimensions for ten specimen individuals – varying in total length from 18 to 249 feet !

Fig. 29 shows his hypothetical Pinniped in outline. Personally, I am inclined to view this theory slightly askance, because I regard it as founded on fallacious premises. In the first place, I should certainly cut his list of accepted cases down to one-half, or even less – for some of them, to my mind, are hoaxes ; some admit of other and more probable explanations ; and many are so lacking in accurate detail as to be almost valueless. And, secondly, he assumes that, in every one of the hundred and sixty, exactly the same type of creature was seen – so that he has to reconcile all the reported details of every case with those of every other. It is not surprising, therefore, that some of his results – such as the amazing length of tail, nearly as long as that of head, neck, and body combined – should appear far-fetched. On the other hand, it must be admitted that he has worked out his theory with immense diligence – but to my mind this is somewhat mis-applied, while the theory itself is based upon several assumptions which are flatly contradicted by the evidence.¹

¹ See p. 276.

F. *Supposed survivals of 'extinct' reptiles.*

Lastly, I come to a group of theories which assume that the reported sea-serpents are, actually, surviving specimens (or, close relations) of the *Enaliosauria*, or Marine Lizards ; creatures generally regarded as having become extinct long before the appearance of man on this planet.

It is quite true that there is good reason for believing that the *Enaliosauria* were originally land reptiles which, in course of time, took to the sea as a permanent habitat ; it is also true that, in all probability, the whales did the same, and have survived to our own day. But it should be remembered that the two occurrences are separated by a vast interval of time ; and that, while it is barely possible that a Mesozoic reptile, living in the sea and thereby safeguarded from many of the secular changes fatal to its land contemporaries, might have survived to our own day, the chances against this run into almost astronomical figures.

Against this, it has been replied that several existing creatures, such as the *Chimæra* (or sea-cat), the long-necked river-tortoise, and the iguana are closely analogous to forms which existed in the Mesozoic era, and of which no intermediate examples are known. By analogy, it would seem at least possible that forms closely related to, if not lineal successors of, the *Enaliosauria* may still exist, even though (like the *Chimæra* itself) rarely met with : and that the absence of links in the chain is not a complete disproof of its existence. A dictum of Agassiz, the American naturalist, upon this point is often quoted. It would, he remarked, be in precise conformity with analogy that a creature of Enaliosaurian type should exist in the American seas, since he had found numerous instances (such as the gar-pike) in which the fossil forms of the Old world were represented by living types in the

New. It should, however, be mentioned that this opinion was not, apparently, delivered in writing¹ ; and it has a faintly patriotic flavour suggestive of an after-dinner speech in pre-Volstead times.

I turn to the three Enaliosaurians suggested as models from which the present-day sea-serpent may have developed.

25. *Ichthyosaurus*.²

Also termed the 'Great Fish-Lizard,' this creature resembled a whale in general outline, with a large head and jaws, and enormous bony eye-sockets. As with a whale, its lack of any definite neck puts it, or any successor resembling it, out of court as an adequate explanation. It may be noted though, as a minor point of interest, that types are known which have a ridge of fins, along the rear half of the back, curiously suggestive of that seen from the *Osborne*.

26. *Elasmosaurus*.

27. *Plesiosaurus*.

These two theories relate to creatures so closely similar that they can best be discussed under one head. The *Elasmosaurus* was an American variant of the *Plesiosaurus*, differing chiefly in the arrangement of the breast-bones.

The suggestion that the sea-serpent may be a survival of the *Plesiosaurus*, or a creature closely similar to it, has often been made ; an occurrence which, considering how closely it squares with the reported facts, is exceedingly natural. It was put forward by several of the writers who discussed the 'Animal of Stronsa' ; and,

¹ It first appeared, so far as I can trace, in the *Zoologist*, 1849, p. 2395 ; in a letter from an unnamed correspondent.

² Commemorated in rousing verse by Sir Edward Parry. See his *Butter Scotia*, chap. ix.

later, by Newman, editor of the *Zoologist*, and others. But its ablest advocate was Philip Gosse, and the following is his exposition of it. Describing the Plesiosaurus, he remarks¹ :

‘ . . . The head was fixed at the extremity of a neck, composed of thirty to forty vertebrae, which, from its extraordinary length, slenderness, and flexibility, must have been the very counterpart of the body of a serpent. This snake-like neck merged insensibly into a compact and moderately slender body, which carried two pairs of paddles, very much like those of a sea-turtle, and terminated behind in a gradually attenuated tail. ‘ Thus, if the *Plesiosaur* could have been seen alive,’ you would have discerned nearly its total length at the surface of the water, propelled at a rapid rate, without any undulation, by an apparatus altogether invisible, — the powerful paddles beneath ; while the entire serpentine neck would probably be projected obliquely, carrying the reptilian head, with an eye of moderate aperture, and a mouth whose gape did not extend beyond the eye.

‘ Add to this a covering of the body not formed of scales, bony plates, or other form of solidified integument, but a yielding, leathery skin, probably black and smooth, like that of a whale ; give the creature a length of some sixty feet or more, and you would have before you almost the very counterpart of the apparition that wrought such amazement on board the *Dædalus*. The position of the nostrils at the summit of the head indicates, that, on first coming to the surface from the depths of the sea, the animal would spout in the manner of the whales, — a circumstance reported by some observers of the sea-serpent.

¹ *The Romance of Natural History*, pp. 357, 358. ² See Plate VII.



PLATE VII.

A PLESIOSAURUS

NOTE.—Although partly conjectural, this drawing of the creature as it would have appeared when swimming is probably not far from the truth.

From Lankester's 'Extinct Animals'

[Facing p. 274]



‘ I must confess that I am myself far more disposed to acquiesce in this hypothesis than in any other that has been mooted. Not that I would identify the animals seen with the actual *Plesiosaurs* of the lias. None of them yet discovered appear to exceed thirty-five feet in length, which is scarcely half sufficient to meet the exigencies of the case. I should not look for any species, scarcely even any genus, to be perpetuated from the oolitic period to the present. Admitting the actual continuation of the order *Enaliosauria*, it would be, I think, quite in conformity with general analogy to find important generic modifications. . . .’

It will be noted that Gosse wrote with the *Dædalus* case chiefly in mind ; but his words are equally applicable to later reports, such as those of Dr. Matheson, Captain Cringle, and Captain Dean. Of all the theories here stated, it will, I think, be admitted that that of a modified *Plesiosaurus* covers the facts (or the great majority of them) better than any other.

It should be noted, however, that it was discussed¹ and rejected by Oudemans. I hope, however, that he will pardon me for saying that I regard his reasons for so doing as slightly fanciful.

He gives only two, as follows :

‘ 1. The neck of the *Plesiosaurus* must have been fit to be bent in all directions, but I think no palæontologist will ever admit that its trunk or backbone could be bent in such vertical undulations, as is the case with the sea-serpents.

‘ 2. The *Plesiosaurus* may have been destitute of scales, and may have had a smooth skin, it can never

¹ *The Great Sea-Serpent*, pp. 401-34.

have been provided with a hairy skin as seals have, and at all events it had no mane, and no whiskers.'

As already mentioned in chapter II, it seems quite likely that the reported 'vertical undulations' are, in great measure, due to wrinkling or humping of the creature's skin, produced at will by muscular contraction. Some part of them may also be due to the deceptive effect of slight ripples — an effect which, if the sea were assumed to be perfectly calm, would be put down to undulations of the body rather than of the water in which it was moving. Lastly, a creature with so very flexible a neck and tail is not likely to have had a perfectly inflexible body.

Secondly, it is remarkable that, out of all Oudemans' 162¹ reports, there is *not one*, as he admits, which specifically states that the creature observed had a hairy skin — and there are many which state that it appeared smooth ! Yet he discards this overwhelming weight of evidence with the utmost calmness, merely remarking that such a creature *must* have a hairy skin, because it has whiskers ! And his sole authority for the whiskers is Pontoppidan, who wrote from hearsay ! As before, there is *not one* of his 160 reports in which any mention is made of whiskers² having been observed. Surely, dogmatism could scarcely go further. Compared with this, his *ex cathedra* assertion that the Plesiosaurus had no mane — a point on which we are, at present, in complete ignorance — is a mere trifle.

¹ He gives, actually, 187, but only discusses 162 — the remaining 25 forming an appendix of lately received reports.

² Admittedly, Mr. Mackintosh Bell's creature is described as having whiskers — but, as already explained, I do not class this as exactly a typical case. I know of no other in which whiskers are mentioned.

CONCLUSION

HITHERTO, I have done my best to present the facts of the case, and (avoiding more than incidental comment) to supplement them by the opinions, *pro* and *con*, of critics much better qualified than myself. But I should like, in conclusion, to put on record my own views – not as of any intrinsic value, but as affording a fair target for future writers on the subject.

To my mind, the evidence available at present – and even the selection of that evidence given in these pages – goes all the way to demonstrate the real existence of more than one type of creature not yet scientifically described. I should be inclined to say that it gave ground for believing in three – a long-necked seal, such as that seen by Mr. Mackintosh Bell ; a gigantic turtle-like creature (the Moha Moha, and possibly the *Valhalla's* monster) : and (deducible from the majority of the reports) a creature larger than either, and much resembling in outline and structure the *Plesiosaurus* of Mesozoic times. I do not suggest that the last-named is actually a *Plesiosaurus*, but that it is either one of its descendants or has evolved along similar lines.

In either case, I suggest that there is little doubt that it has much the same characteristics – a slender neck and tail and a comparatively large body with propelling flippers. Its colour is dark brown above and lighter below, its skin smooth, and some specimens probably possess a mane. Its principal habitat is the Atlantic

Ocean, both North and South¹ – and it appears to like sunshine and hot weather, and to be migratory.

Let us hope that, one day, its existence will be more definitely established by the capture of an actual specimen ; or, equally to the point and far better, by a photograph or film of one. I say ‘far better,’ because while I imagine that the sea-serpent’s principal enemies, at present, are the sperm-whale and the ‘killer,’ it has another potential enemy who, if he ever comes to believe in it, will be its worst.

That enemy is Man himself. In these days the lot of any rare creature is a hard one. If, for any conceivable reason, it is of the slightest commercial value – whether by reason of its beauty, or its utility, or even its rarity alone – its rapid extinction is practically certain. The list of creatures which Man has swept out of existence for no reason but his own greed and selfishness – the Great Auk, the Dodo, Steller’s sea-cow, the passenger pigeon, and the like – is a pitiable one. Even his brother man has not escaped – witness the fate of the Tasmanian Bushmen, and the steady degeneration of savage communities under the influence of ‘civilised’ man’s inseparable comrades – drink and disease. Nothing is safe from him on land, and even the seven seas give no real protection against him – he has already exterminated, or almost exterminated, some species of whales and seals : at least, he has driven them from all their known haunts.

‘ . . . Above all others, we should protect and hold sacred those types, Nature’s masterpieces, which are first singled out for destruction on account of their size, or splendour, or rarity, and that false detestable glory which is accorded to their most successful slayers. In ancient

¹ See Fig. 30 (end-paper of this volume).

*times the spirit of life shone brightest in these ; and when others that shared the earth with them were taken by death they were left, being more worthy of perpetuation. Like immortal flowers they have drifted down to us on the ocean of time, and their strangeness and beauty bring to our imaginations a dream and a picture of that unknown world, immeasurably far removed, where man was not : and when they perish, something of gladness goes out from Nature, and the sunshine loses something of its brightness.'*¹

I could wish that these words of W. H. Hudson — the charter of all wild creatures verging upon extinction — might be brought home to those 'sportsmen,' traders, and collectors who, for personal gain, wantonly destroy what Man can never, by any belated effort, replace.

¹ *The Naturalist in La Plata*, p. 29.

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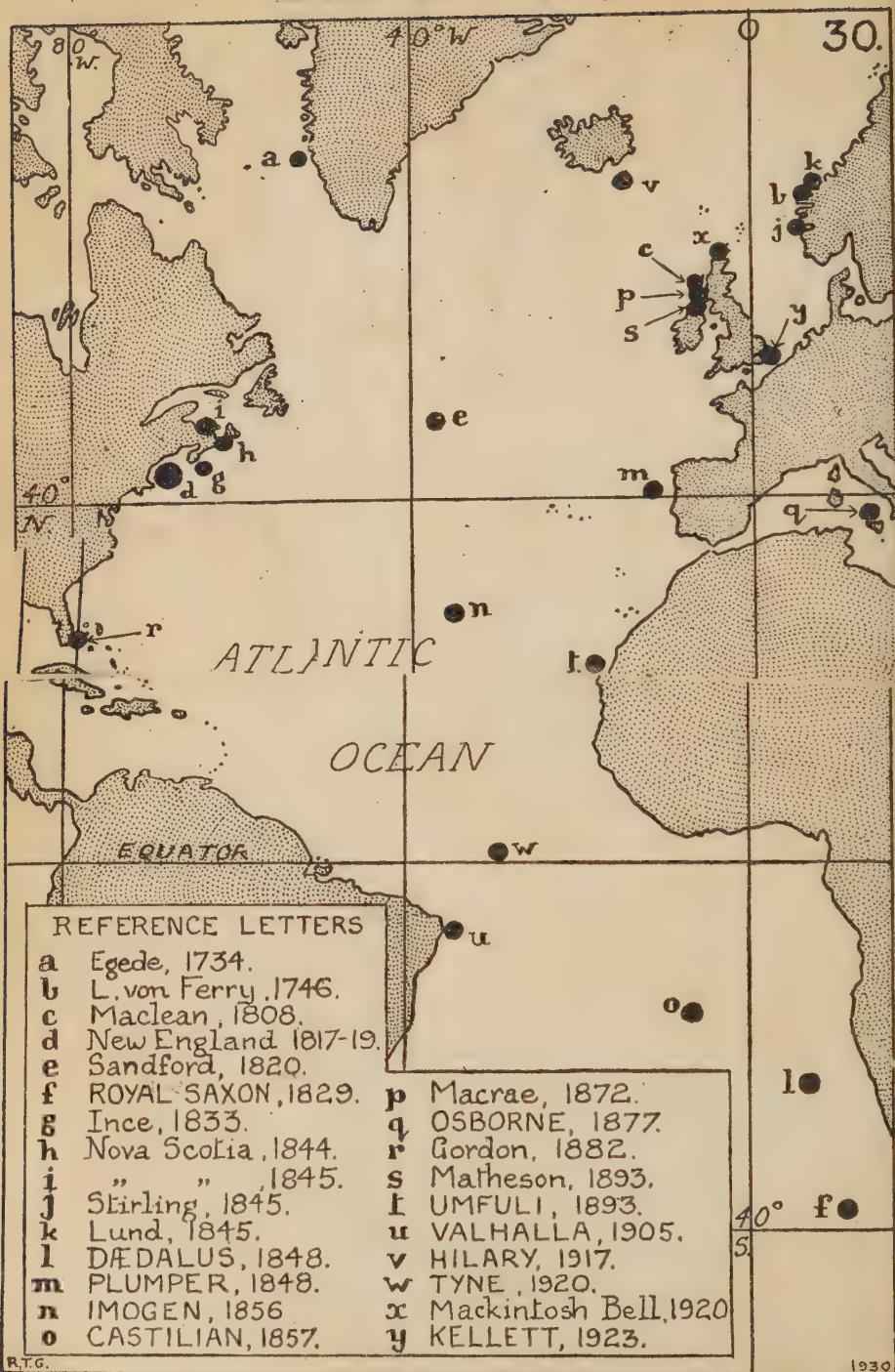
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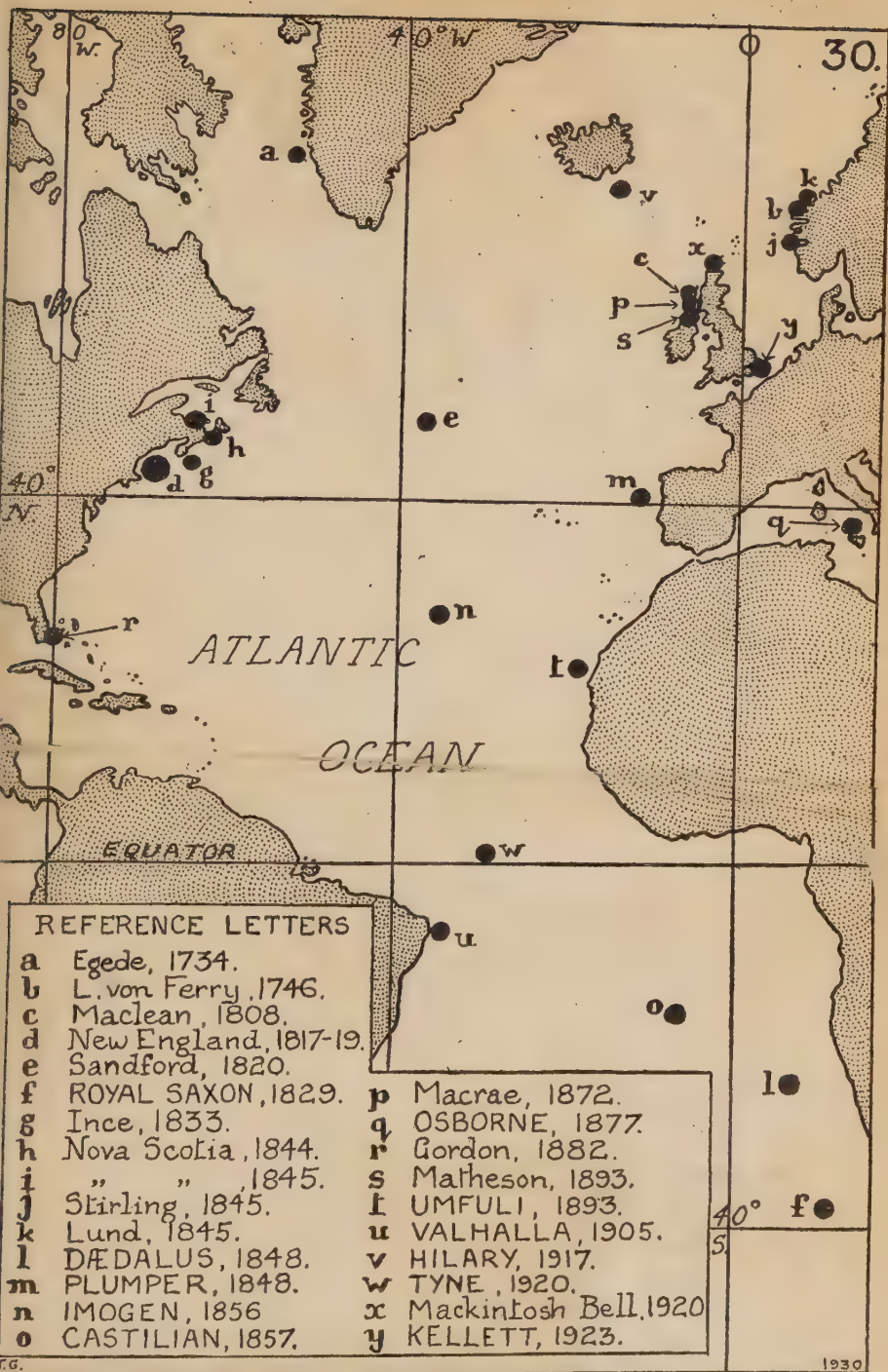
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